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SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

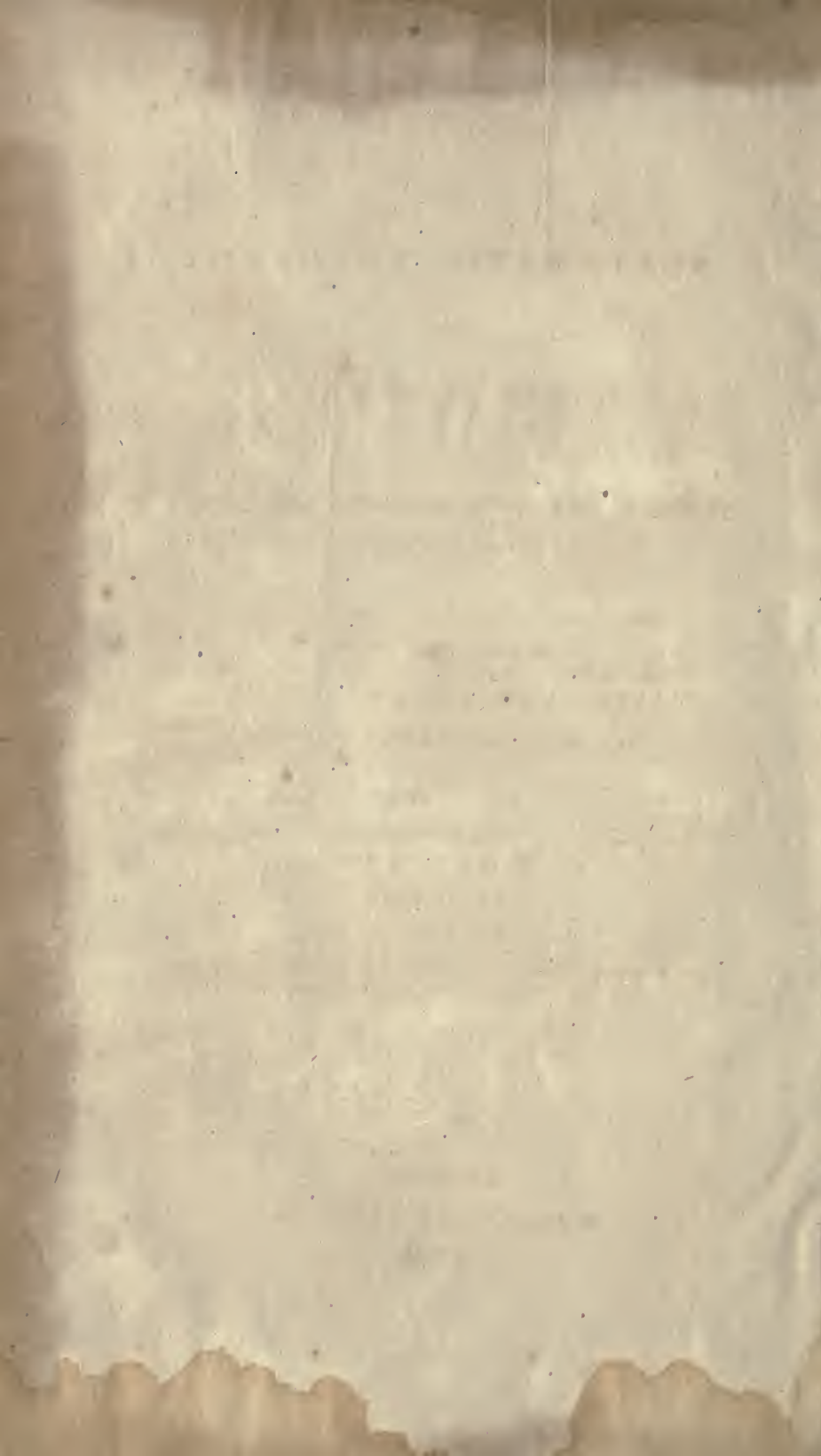
BY J. H. COOPER

DISCOURSE ON SCOUTING

BY J. H. COOPER

1855

NEW YORK: J. H. COOPER



LECTURES
ON
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
AND
PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

BY THE LATE GEORGE CAMPBELL, D. D. F. R. S. Ed.

PRINCIPAL OF MARISCHAL COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
DIALOGUES ON ELOQUENCE,
BY M. DE FENELON, ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY.

EDITED BY
HENRY J. RIPLEY,
PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE AND PASTORAL DUTIES
IN THE NEWTON THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION.

BOSTON:
LINCOLN AND EDMANDS.
1832.



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PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

To theological students and ministers in this country, a new edition of the following work will, it is hoped, be highly acceptable. The Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence are studied in one of the departments of the Newton Theological Institution. For several years the work has been out of print, and it has been found difficult to procure the requisite number of copies. In consequence of a suggestion from my respected colleague, Professor Chase, I was induced to undertake the present edition. My original design was, that the Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence should be published without the Lectures on Systematic Theology; for the latter course of Lectures pertains to studies different from those in regard to which I have a responsibility, and the two series are not, from the nature of the subjects, necessarily connected.

Another perusal, however, of the Lectures on Systematic Theology has made me unwilling to lose the present opportunity for extending their influence. They inculcate the true mode in which the study of theology should be conducted. This study has been too long and too much pursued without a thorough and an impartial investigation of the pure word of God. And though all have joined in the declaration, 'The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants,' yet who, of only ordinary opportunities for observation, can have failed to perceive that the spirit of this declaration has not thoroughly pervaded even favored places of theological study? Of the impropriety here alluded to, we have all been guilty; we have all too much neglected 'the law and the testimony,' and have too much depended upon human authorities for not a few modes of thinking and of expression.

Deeply impressed with the correctness and the value of the sentiments contained in these Lectures on Systematic Theology, I have thought it desirable that they should be perpetuated. This

desire was also somewhat increased by the fact, that the Theological Institution with which I have the happiness to be connected, has adopted a course of study very similar to that which Dr. Campbell recommends; a course, which does not require a connected scheme of theology to be formed by the student, till he shall have carefully studied in the original languages, the whole of the New Testament and the most important portions of the Old.

It has, however, been thought best to republish only the first of those Lectures which have been placed, in other editions, at the commencement of the volume, and which have been entitled Introductory Discourses. The omission of these Discourses will be satisfactory to all, when it is stated that, with the exception of the first, they are almost throughout of a local nature, having reference to the peculiar state of things in the established church of Scotland, and in the college at Aberdeen, of which the author was Principal.

For the same reason, the first paragraph in the first Lecture on Systematic Theology has been omitted.

The Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence need no recommendation. During the several years in which I have given instruction in the department of Pastoral Duties, I have met with nothing so well adapted to prepare a student for the composition of sermons. This, however, does not imply that every thing contained in these Lectures is indispensable, or is in fact just as it should be. Some may doubt the utility of the author's exact distribution of sermons into the various kinds which he mentions. Some, again, may fear that sermons executed according to his directions would be like marble statues, graceful indeed, and polished, yet destitute of living expression. But of what system of directions on any subject, as used by a beginner, may not the same complaint be made? Shall the artist then refuse to study rules? Shall we have no books on rhetoric? It requires no uncommon share of good sense either in a student or an instructor, least of all in the affectionate pastor, to derive the contemplated benefit from a system of directions, and, at the same time, to avoid the stiffness of scholastic rule. Experience will soon render the application of rules easy; and to the correctness which the study of rules may impart, will add a happy adaptation to the characters and circumstances of men. For this adaptation, as for true eloquence, 'labor and learning may toil, but they will toil in vain. They cannot compass it. It must exist in the man;' and it can be cherished and perfected only by his com-

ing into contact with his fellow-men. He must be a slow learner indeed who does not soon discover, that one of the most important rules for preparing profitable sermons in the actual state of a minister's people is, not to be *so fettered* by any rules respecting the choice of a subject or text, or respecting the manner of discussion, as to be prevented from embracing a favorable opportunity for impressing religious truth. A correct acquaintance with the Scriptures, a mind deeply imbued with their sentiments, good common sense, an affectionate solicitude for the salvation of men, an abiding sense of responsibility to God, are the grand requisites for useful preaching. And did a man possessing these, never read Fordyce, Claude, or Campbell, he still might become a highly valuable minister of the gospel. But of the utility of some helps in this part of the minister's duty, who can doubt? That helps have been sought to an extreme, is painfully evident from the fact that such books as Simeon's *Skeletons* and Hannam's *Pulpit Assistant*, have found purchasers. The other extreme would be, for an unpractised man to neglect all helps. A suitable medium is furnished by Dr. Campbell, whose directions proceed from a correct view of human nature, and are adapted to call forth and sharpen the mental powers of the preacher.

In preparing this edition, my aim has been to make the work more fitted to students in this country, and more profitable to those whose studies have not extended beyond their own language. In former editions, sentences occur in the Latin language without a translation. These are now made intelligible to the mere English reader. The last paragraph of the Introductory Discourse has been omitted, as it only contained the author's reasons for not writing his Lectures in Latin. In the third and fourth of the Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence, as published in former editions, are remarks specially adapted to natives of Scotland; in these two Lectures six sentences have been omitted as not applicable in this country, and four others have been modified so as to retain what would be universally applicable. In the same Lectures, for the word *elocution* the word *expression* has been substituted, a word used by Dr. Campbell as conveying essentially the same idea as he intended to convey by the word *elocution*. But as the word *elocution* has now an entirely different meaning, no doubt were Dr. Campbell living, he himself would employ a different word. The reader who is accustomed to Dr. Campbell's style, will also perceive that the pronoun

you, for the nominative plural, has been substituted for the antiquated *ye*. A few other peculiarities of Dr. Campbell which occur in this work, it was not thought expedient to alter.

The excellence of Fenelon's Dialogues concerning Eloquence, their general agreement with the sentiments of Dr. Campbell's Lectures, and their more ample discussion of certain topics connected with preaching, render their insertion in this volume quite appropriate. These Dialogues Dr. Doddridge has called 'incomparable dialogues on eloquence; which,' he remarks, 'may God put it into the hearts of our preachers often and attentively to read.'

It will be perceived that the copious Greek and Latin notes introduced by Fenelon are not translated. The reasons for not translating them are simply these. The reader who is acquainted with merely the English language, is not embarrassed by them, and does not, in consequence of them, lose any of the author's thoughts. The classical reader will also perceive, that the notes, for the most part, express the same ideas as are expressed in the text, and seem intended by Fenelon as confirmations of his sentiments, derived from the distinguished writers of antiquity; or rather, as proofs that he drew his notions of eloquence from the great masters of oratory.

H. J. RIPLEY.

Newton Theological Institution,
February, 1832.



ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE favourable reception of the Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, and the desire of many to have an opportunity of perusing Dr. Campbell's prelections on the other branches of his theological courses, have led to the publication of the following work. The Lectures on Ecclesiastical History the author had prepared for the press, having carefully transcribed and corrected them. The prelections now published were composed for the benefit of the students of divinity in Marischal College, without any view to publication. They were first delivered in the years 1772 and 1773, and the author continued, during his professorship, to read them to the students, as they had been at first composed. Indeed, they were written so closely as to admit very little addition or alteration.

But though they want the benefit of the author's corrections, the language, it is presumed, will not be found very deficient in that of perspicuity, precision and accuracy, which distinguished Dr. Campbell as a writer. His other acknowledged qualities as an author, the judicious and attentive reader will not be at a loss to discern. He will discover in this volume great ingenuity with no affectation of singularity, freedom and impartiality of spirit

without any propensity to fabricate new theories, acuteness of understanding without precipitancy or impatience in judging ; endowments perhaps rare, but of the first importance in theological discussions.

To students of theology these discourses will be highly useful. They are more of a practical nature, than his lectures formerly published, and they abound in valuable counsels and remarks. From this volume and from the author's work on the Gospels, the student will learn, both by precept and example, how his industry and ingenuity may be most profitably employed.

The greater part of the abstract theological questions, which have afforded matter of inexhaustible contention, and the precarious speculations of some of our late intrepid theorists in religion, Dr. Campbell regarded as worse than unprofitable. In these theorists he observed a fundamental mistake, in regard to the proper province of the reasoning faculty. Impatience in judging, he thought, was another great source of the evil alluded to. "Some people," he remarks in his last preliminary dissertation to his work on the Gospels, "have so strong a propensity to form fixed opinions on every subject to which they turn their thoughts, that their mind will brook no delay. They cannot bear to doubt or hesitate. Suspense in judging is to them more insufferable, than the manifest hazard of judging wrong." He adds a little after, "In questions, which have appeared to me, either unimportant, or of very dubious solution, I have thought it better to be silent, than to amuse the reader, with those remarks in which I have myself found no satisfaction." Never could teacher, with a better grace, recommend a patient cautiousness in judging. His premises, which are often of greater importance than a superficial reader is aware of, are commonly sure ; the proper and obvious inferences he often leaves to the reader to deduce. The conclusions, which the author draws, are so well limited, and expressed in terms so precise, and so remote from the ostentatious

and dogmatical manner, that the attentive reader is inclined to think, that he sometimes achieves more than he had led us to expect.

On questions that have been rendered intricate by using scriptural terms in a sense merely modern, and of such questions the number is not small, Dr. Campbell's clearness of apprehension, critical acuteness and patience of research, have enabled him to throw a good deal of light. The Lectures on Ecclesiastical History afford some striking examples of his success in this way. And his work on the Gospels abounds in illustrations of scripture, that may be of great utility in reforming our style in sacred matters, and in shortening, if not deciding, many theological questions. Some good judges have no hesitation in saying, that they never saw the scripture terms *heresy* and *schism*, well explained, till they read Dr. Campbell's Preliminary Dissertations. Former writers had been so far misled by the common and modern acceptance of the terms, as to include error in doctrine as essential to the notion of heresy, and to make a separation from communion in religious offices the distinguishing badge of schism. The primitive and genuine import of the words is so clearly ascertained by the author, that if a person unacquainted with the ecclesiastical and comparatively modern language were to read the dissertation, he would wonder, that there should ever have been any difficulty or difference of opinion on the question. This is only one instance out of many that might be produced from the same work, in which the reader will find the obscurity, wherein a subject was formerly involved, vanish entirely, and the genuine conceptions of the most venerable antiquity unfolded to his view. When that great work is understood and studied with the attention it merits, may it not be expected to have considerable influence, in leading men to look for the good old paths, that may have been long untrodden, and known but to few?

In the preface to the work above quoted, speaking of expositors of Scripture, the author has the following remark, "If I can safely

reason from experience, I do not hesitate to say, that the least dogmatical, the most diffident of their own judgment, and moderate in their opinion of others, will be ever found the most judicious." To judge by this criterion, few authors have a better claim to our confidence than Dr. Campbell. Few have seen the right track so clearly, and few have advanced in it with a firmer step.

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LECTURES.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

Of the Science of Theology, and its several Branches.

THAT we may discover what is necessary for the acquisition of any science, we ought to consider attentively the end for which it is made the object of our pursuit. If the ultimate end be knowledge, or that entertainment which the mind derives from the perception of truth, the properest plan of teaching must be very different from that which ought to be adopted, when the end is practice. And as this last admits a subdivision (for there may be practical ends of very different sorts) the method best adapted to one sort may not be the best adapted to another.

I explain myself by an example, which comes directly to the point in hand. The Christian theology may be studied, first, like any other branch of liberal education, in order to gratify a laudable curiosity; or, secondly, to qualify us for acting the part of Christians, by practising the duties of the Christian life; or, lastly, to qualify us for discharging the office of Christian pastors. It is manifest, that if, for answering properly the first of these purposes, a good deal more is requisite, than would suffice for attaining the second, yet much less is necessary for the accomplishment of both these ends, than for answering the third. With regard to the first, which terminates in the acquisition of knowledge, theology is now very rarely, if ever, in this country, studied, like other sciences, purely for its own sake, as a part of genteel education, which, (abstracting from its utility) is both ornamental and entertaining.

Why it is not, though we may trace the causes, no good reason that I know of can be assigned. And with regard to the second view of teaching, namely to promote the practice of the duties of Christian life, every minister of a parish is thus far a professor of divinity, and every parishioner is, or ought to be, thus far a student.

It is, I may say, solely for the third purpose, the most comprehensive of all, to fit us for the discharge of the duties of the pastoral office, that theological schools with us have been erected. I say this end is the most comprehensive of all. The least of what is required in the Christian pastor, is, that he may be qualified for discharging the several duties of the Christian life; for in these he ought to be an ensample to the flock. Further, whatever, in respect of knowledge, supplies the materials necessary for edifying, comforting, and protecting from all spiritual danger the people that may be committed to his charge, or is of use for defending the cause of his Master, must evidently be a proper study for the man who intends to enter into the holy ministry. Again, whatever may enable him to make a proper application of those acquisitions in knowledge, so as to turn them to the best account for the benefit of his people, is not less requisite. To little purpose will it be for him to be possessed of the best materials, if he have not acquired the skill to use them. The former we may call the theory of the profession; the latter the practice. That both are necessary is manifest. The first without the second, however considerable, may be compared to wealth without economy. It will not be found near so beneficial to the owner, and those who depend on him for their support, as a more scanty store would be, where this virtue is understood and practised in perfection. Nor will the second do entirely without the first; for the best economy in the world can be of no value, where there is no subject to be exercised upon. Hence arises a two-fold division of what is proper to be taught to all who have made choice of this profession, a division which merits your particular attention. The first regards purely the science of theology, the second the application of that science to the purposes of the Christian pastor.

Under what concerns the science, I would comprehend all that knowledge in relation to our holy religion, which serves immediately to illustrate, to confirm, or to recommend it. I say, *immediately*, because there are several acquisitions in literature which the Christian divine ought previously to have made, and which are not only important, but even necessary in the way of preparation, though the connection of some of them with the Christian theology

may, upon a superficial view, appear remote. Such are the Latin tongue, moral philosophy, pneumatology, natural theology, and even history, both ancient and modern, but especially the former. But though several branches of knowledge may contribute less or more to all the different purposes of illustrating, confirming and recommending religion, it is evident that some studies are more directly adapted to one of these purposes, and others to another.

Let us begin with the illustration of our religion. It is proper to acquire a right apprehension of the subject, before we consider either its evidence, or what may serve to recommend it. The knowledge of the Christian theology, in the strictest sense of the word, is no doubt principally to be sought for in the books of the New Testament. It was for the publication of this religion throughout the world, that these books were originally written. They contain the doctrine which first our Lord Jesus Christ himself, afterwards his apostles in his name, by their preaching, promulgated to mankind. As those great events, which make the subject, and serve as a foundation to the whole, were not accomplished till the ascension of our Lord, Christianity as a religious institution, authoritatively given by the Almighty to the human race, may be considered as commencing from the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

I said, that the knowledge of our religion was principally to be learnt from the books of the New Testament, but neither entirely nor solely from these books. In these, there are frequent references to the doctrines contained, the precepts given, and the facts recorded, in other books of an older date, as comprising also a divine revelation supposed to be already known, and therefore not always quoted, when referred to, so as to be engrossed in the writings of the disciples of our Lord. These are the books of the Old Testament. Though both are of divine authority, and though each is eminently useful to the right understanding of the other, there is this difference in the reception due to them from Christians. The import of the declarations and the obligation of the precepts in the scriptures of the Old Testament are more properly to be interpreted and limited by those of the New, than the declarations and precepts of the scriptures of the New Testament can be by those of the Old. The reason is obvious. The Mosaic dispensation was introductory and subordinate to the Christian, to which it pointed, and in which it had its consummation. It was no other than the dawn of that light,

which by the coming of Jesus Christ has arisen on the nations in all its glory. Things necessarily obscure in the former are cleared up by the latter. From this also we learn to distinguish things of temporary, from things of perpetual obligation. It happens in several instances, that what was incumbent under the weakness of the first economy, is superseded by the perfection of the last.

Now for attaining a more perfect knowledge of the scriptures, none will question the utility of studying carefully those languages in which they were originally composed. These are especially the Hebrew and the Greek. I say *especially*, because a small part of the Old Testament is written in the Chaldee, which ought rather perhaps to be considered as a sister dialect of the Hebrew, than as a different tongue.

The books of the Old Testament are the only books extant, which are written in the genuine ancient Hebrew. And though the writings of the New Testament make, in respect to size, but an inconsiderable part of what is written in Greek, their style, or rather idiom, has something in it so peculiar, that neither the knowledge of the elements of the language, nor an acquaintance with the Greek classics, will always be sufficient to remove the difficulties that may occur, and to lead us to the right understanding of the sacred text. To this the knowledge of the Hebrew will be found greatly subservient: for as the penmen of the New Testament were of the Jewish nation, and had early been accustomed to the manner and phraseology of the Septuagint, a literal version of the Old Testament into Greek; there is a peculiarity in their idiom, to be master of which requires an intimate acquaintance with that people's manner of thinking (and in this every people has something peculiar) as well as a critical attention to their turn of expression, both in their native tongue, and in that most ancient translation. Leaving therefore the rudiments of those tongues, as what ought to be studied under their several professors, or privately with the help of books, I shall consider what may be necessary, for begetting and improving in us a critical discernment in both, as far as holy writ is concerned. What is necessary for the attainment of this end I shall comprehend under the name of *biblical criticism*. This I consider as the first branch of the theoretical part of the study of theology, and as particularly calculated for the elucidation of our religion, by leading us to the true meaning of the sacred volume, its acknowledged source.

Again, the Christian revelation comprising a most important narrative of a series of events, relating to the creation, the fall, the recovery, and the eternal state of man ; and the three first of these including a period of some thousands of years now elapsed, and being intimately connected with the history of a particular nation, during a great part of that time ; the knowledge of the polity, laws, customs, and memorable transactions of that nation, must be of considerable consequence to the theological student, both for the illustration and for the confirmation of the sacred books. On the other hand, it will not be of less consequence for the confirmation of our religion, and the recommendation of this study, by rendering our knowledge in divinity more extensively useful, that we be acquainted also with those events, which the propagation and establishment of Christianity have given rise to, from its first publication by the apostles, to the present time. The whole of this branch we may denominate *sacred history*, which naturally divides itself into two parts, the Jewish and the ecclesiastical, or that which preceded, and that which has followed, the commencement of the gospel dispensation.

Further, as the great truths and precepts of our religion are not arranged methodically in sacred writ, in the form of an art or science, but are disclosed gradually, as it suited the ends of Providence, and pleased the Divine Wisdom to reveal them, and as some of the truths are explained and the duties recommended in some respect incidentally, as time and circumstances have given the occasion, it is of consequence that the theological student should have it in his power to contemplate them in their natural connexion, and thus be enabled to perceive both the mutual dependence of the parts and the symmetry of the whole. Arrangement, every one acknowledges, is a very considerable help both to the understanding and to the memory ; and the more simple and natural the arrangement is, the greater is the assistance which we derive from it. There are indeed few arts or sciences which may not be digested into different methods ; and each method may have advantages peculiar to itself ; yet in general it may be affirmed, that that arrangement will answer best upon the whole, wherein the order of nature is most strictly adhered to, and wherein nothing is taught previously, which presupposes the knowledge of what is to be explained afterwards. This branch of study I call the *Christian system* ; and it is commonly considered as the science of theology, strictly so called ; the other branches, however indispensable, being

more properly subservient to the attainment of this, than this can, with any propriety, be said to be to them.

Nor is it any objection either against holy writ on the one hand, or against this study on the other, that there is no such digest of the doctrines and precepts of our religion exhibited in the Bible. It is no objection against holy writ, because to one who considers attentively the whole plan of Providence regarding the redemption and final restoration of man, it will be evident, that in order to the perfecting of the whole, the parts must have been unveiled successively and by degrees, as the scheme advanced towards its completion. And if the doctrines to be believed and the duties to be practised, are delivered there with sufficient clearness, we have no reason to complain; nor is it for us to prescribe rules to Infinite Wisdom. On the other hand, it is no objection against this study, or the attempt to reduce the articles of our religion into a systematic form, that they are not thus methodically digested in the Bible. Holy writ is given us, that it may be used by us for our spiritual instruction and improvement; reason is given us to enable us to make the proper use of both the temporal and the spiritual benefits which God hath seen meet to bestow. The conduct of the beneficent Father of the universe is entirely analogous in both. He confers liberally the materials or means of enjoyment, he gives the capacity of using them, at the same time he requires the exertion of that capacity, that so the advantages he has bestowed may be turned by us to the best account. We are then at liberty, nay it is our duty, to arrange the doctrine of holy writ in such a way, as may prove most useful in assisting us, both to understand and to retain it.

It has been objected more plausibly against every attempt of reducing the principles and precepts of religion to an order, which may be called merely human and artificial, that it has but too plain a tendency to stint the powers of the mind, biasing it in favour of a particular set of opinions, infusing prejudices against what does not perfectly tally with a system perhaps too hastily adopted, and fomenting a spirit of dogmatism whereby we are led to pronounce positively on points which scripture has left undecided, or to which perhaps our faculties are not adapted. That this has often been the consequence on the mind of the systematic student, is a lamentable truth, which experience but too clearly evinces. On inquiry, however, it will generally be found to have arisen not so much from the study itself, of which it is by no means a necessary consequence, as from something wrong in the manner of conducting it. Let us

then, like wise men, guard against the abuse without renouncing the use, that is, without relinquishing the advantage which may result from this study properly pursued.

And the more effectually to guard us against this abuse, let us habitually attend to the three following important considerations. First, that every truth contained in divine revelation, or deducible from it, is not conveyed with equal perspicuity, nor is in itself of equal importance. There are some things so often, and so clearly laid down in scripture, that hardly any, who profess the belief of revealed religion, pretend to question them. About these, there is no controversy in the church. Such are the doctrines of the unity, the spirituality, the natural and moral attributes of God, the creation, preservation and government of the world by him; the principal events in the life of Jesus Christ, as well as his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, the doctrine of a future judgment, heaven and hell, together with all those moral truths which exhibit the great outlines of our duty to God, our neighbour and ourselves. In general it will be found, that what is of most importance to us to be acquainted with and believed, is oftenest and most clearly inculcated; and that, as we find, there are degrees in belief as well as in evidence, it is a very natural and just conclusion, that our belief in those points is most rigorously required, which are notified to us in scripture, with the clearest evidence. The more is exacted where much is given, the less, where little is given. The dogmatist knows nothing of degrees, either in evidence or in faith. He has properly no opinions or doubts. Every thing with him is either certainly true, or certainly false. Of this turn of mind I shall only say, that far from being an indication of vigour, it is a sure indication of debility in the intellectual powers.

A second consideration is, that many questions will be found to have been agitated among theologians, as to which the scriptures when examined with impartiality, cannot be said to have given a decision on either side; though, were we to judge from the misrepresentations of the controvertists themselves, we should be led to conclude, that contradictory decisions had been given, which equally favoured both sides. It has not been duly attended to by any party, that a revelation from God was not given us, to make us subtle metaphysicians, dexterous at solving abstruse and knotty questions, but to make us good men, to inform us of our duty, and to supply us with the most plain and most cogent motives to a due observance of it. From both the above observations, we should learn, at least,

to be modest in our conclusions, and not over dogmatical or decisive, in regard to matters which may be justly styled of doubtful disputation or of deep research.

The third consideration is, never to think ourselves entitled, even in cases which we may imagine very clear, to form uncharitable judgments of those who think differently. I am satisfied that such judgments on our part are unwarrantable in every case. Of the truth of any tenet said to be revealed, we must judge according to our abilities, before we can believe; but as to the motives by which the opinions of others are influenced, or of their state in God's account, that is no concern of ours. Our Lord Jesus alone is appointed of God the judge of all men; and are we presumptuous enough to think ourselves equal to the office, and to anticipate his sentence? "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." When Peter obtruded upon his Master a question of mere curiosity, and said concerning his fellow disciple, "What shall become of this man?" he was aptly checked by his Lord, and made to attend to what nearly concerned himself, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Once more. It has been the fate of religion, from the beginning, to meet with contradiction. Not only have the divinity (and consequently the truth) of the whole been controverted, but several important articles thereof have been made the subject of disputation, and explained by different persons and parties in ways contradictory to one another; therefore that the student may be enabled, on this momentous subject, to distinguish truth from error, and to defend the former against the most subtle attacks of its adversaries, the patrons of the latter; it is necessary for him to be acquainted with *theological controversy*, which is the fourth and last branch of the theory of theology.

I would not be understood to mean by this, a thorough knowledge of all the disputes that have ever arisen in the church. Such a task would be both endless and unprofitable. Of many of these, it is sufficient to learn from church history, that such questions have been agitated, and what have been the consequences. To enter further into the affair will be found a great waste of time to little purpose. But it is a matter of considerable consequence to us, to be able to defend both natural and revealed religion against the attacks of infidels, and to defend its fundamental principles against those who, though in general they agree with us as to the truth of Christianity,

are disposed to controvert some of its doctrines. A more particular acquaintance therefore with the disputes and questions in theology of the age and country wherein we live, and with the distinguishing tenets of the different sects, with which we are surrounded, is necessary to the divine, not only in point of decency, but even for self defence.

It must be owned at the same time, that this thorny path of controversy is the most unpleasant in all the walks of theology. It is not unpleasant only, but unless trodden with great circumspection, it is also dangerous. Passion, it has been justly said, begets passion, words beget words. It is extremely difficult to preserve moderation, when one is opposed with bigotry ; or evenness of temper, when one is encountered with fury. The love of victory is but too apt to supplant in our breasts the love of knowledge, and in the confusion, dust and smoke, raised by the combatants, both sides often lose sight of truth. These considerations are not mentioned to deter any of you from this part of the study, but to excite all of you to come to it properly prepared, candid, circumspect, modest, attentive, and cool. It has been truly and ingeniously observed, that the ministers of religion are much in the same situation with those builders, who, in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, whilst they worked with one hand, were, on account of their enemies from whom they were continually in danger, obliged to hold a weapon with the other.

Let it here be remarked, that these two last branches, the Christian system and polemic divinity, though perfectly distinct in their nature, are almost universally and very commodiously joined together in the course of study. The consideration of every separate article of religion is aptly accompanied with the consideration of its evidence ; and the consideration of its evidence necessarily requires the consideration of those objections, which arise from a different representation of the doctrine. Thus the great branches of the theoretic part of this profession, though properly four in their nature, are, in regard to the manner in which they may be most conveniently learnt, justly reducible to three, namely, *Scripture Criticism*, *Sacred History*, and *Theological Controversy*. These are sufficient to complete the character of the theologian, as the word is commonly understood ; who is precisely what our Lord has denominated "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,"

who can, like a provident householder, bring out of his treasure, new things and old."

But even what is sufficient to constitute an able divine, is, though a most essential part, yet not all that is necessary to make a useful pastor. The furniture has been pointed out, but not the application. In the former, we may say, lies the knowledge of the profession, but in the latter, the skill.

OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.

LECTURE I.

Of the Study of Natural Religion, and of the Evidences of Christianity.

AS to the order in which our theological inquiries ought to be conducted, it may not be improper to observe here in the entry, that religion hath been often and not unaptly divided into natural and revealed. The former of these, subdivides itself into other two parts, namely, what concerns the nature and providence of God, and what concerns the duties and prospects of man. The first of these is commonly called *natural theology*; the second, *ethics*; both comprised under the science of *pneumatology*, whereof they are indeed the most sublime and most important parts; and which science is itself a branch of philosophy, in the largest acceptation of the word, as importing the interpretation of nature. That to a certain degree the knowledge of divine attributes and of human obligations are discoverable by the light of nature, scripture itself always presupposeth. As to the former, "the heavens," we are told, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork." Again, "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." Nay our methods of arguing on this subject from the effect to the cause, scripture itself disdains not to adopt and authenticate. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" And as to the latter, the duties incumbent on men, our Bible in like manner informs us that "when the Gentiles who have not the (written) law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law to themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or

else excusing one another." Now in strictness of speech neither natural theology nor moral philosophy, nor (which is also sometimes comprehended under the same general name) the doctrines of the immateriality and natural immortality of the soul, fall within my province, as a teacher of Christian theology. They are in fact preliminary studies, and constitute a part of the philosophic course.

It is however necessary, in order both to prevent mistakes and to obviate objections, to observe, that I do by no means intend to insinuate, that these studies are unconnected with the Christian system, and therefore unnecessary. On the contrary, I think them of the utmost consequence. As it is the same God (for there is no other) who is the author of nature and the author of revelation, who speaks to us in the one by his works, and in the other by his Spirit, it becomes his creatures reverently to hearken to his voice, in whatever manner he has pleased to address them. Now the philosopher is by profession the interpreter of nature—that is, of the language of God's works, as the Christian divine is the interpreter of scripture—that is, of the language of God's Spirit. Nor do I mean to signify, that there is not in many things a coincidence in the discoveries made in these two different ways. The conclusions may be the same, though deduced, and justly deduced, from different premises. The result may be one, when the methods of investigation are widely different. There is even a considerable utility in pursuing both methods, as what is clear in the one, may serve to enlighten what is obscure in the other. And both have their difficulties and their obscurities. The most profound philosopher will be the most ready to acknowledge that there are phenomena in nature for which he cannot account; and that divine, you may depend upon it, whatever be his attainments, hath more arrogance than either knowledge or wisdom, who will not admit, that there are many texts in scripture which he cannot explain. Nor does this in the least contradict the protestant doctrine of the perspicuity of sacred writ; for though everything which proceeds from God, it must be of consequence to us to be acquainted with, and therefore requires diligent attention, especially from the minister of his word, yet all the truths revealed are not of equal consequence, as we learn from scripture itself. The most important things are still the plainest, and set in the greatest variety of lights. Now if God is pleased to address us in two different languages, neither of which is without its difficulties, we may find considerable assistance in comparing both for removing the difficulties of each. But though, as I observed, nat-

ural theology and ethics are strictly the province of the philosopher, it may not be amiss, to suggest in a few words concerning the former, that the use of reading elaborate demonstrations of the being and perfections of God, is more perhaps to fix our attention on the object, than to give conviction to the understanding. The natural evidences of true theism are among the simplest, and at the same time the clearest deductions from the effect to the cause. And it were to be wished, that the subject had not been rather perplexed, than facilitated, by the abstruse and metaphysical discussions, in which it hath been sometimes involved.

But to come to the proper department of the Christian divine, the first inquiry that occurs on this subject, is concerning the truth, or, which in the present case is precisely the same, the divinity of our religion. The grand question, to adopt the scripture idiom, is no other than this: Is the doctrine which Jesus Christ preached from heaven, or of men? That it is from heaven, is the avowed belief of all his disciples; that it is of men, is, on the contrary, the declared opinion of Jews and pagans. The Mahometans, indeed, acknowledge its divine original; but as they at the same time maintain, that we have no standard of that religion now existing, the scriptures both Jewish and Christian being totally corrupted, in their account, even in the most essential matters, we are under a necessity of classing them also with the infidels of every other denomination. Would we know in what manner the truth of our religion may be most successfully defended, let us consider in what way it hath been most strenuously attacked. Upon a careful examination of all the multifarious assaults that have been made by argument against the Christian institution by its adversaries, they are almost all reducible to these two classes. They are either attempts against the character of the institution itself, and are produced to evince that it is unworthy of God, and unsuitable to those original sentiments of right and wrong which we derive from natural conscience; or they are levelled against the positive proofs of revelation, and propose to invalidate its evidence. In the first, the subject may be said to be considered as a question of *right*; in the second, as a question of *fact*. Accordingly, objections of the former kind are properly philosophical; of the latter, historical and critical.

As to those of the class first mentioned, upon the most impartial examination I have ever been able to make of them, I have always found, that the much greater part proceeded from a total misap-

prehension of the subject. The spirit of the church, or rather of churchmen of the hierarchy, hath been mistaken for the spirit of the gospel; and the absurd glosses of corrupt and fallible men have been confounded with the pure dictates of the divine oracles. To the candid and intelligent inquirer, there will appear in many of the boasted arguments produced by the most renowned champions in the deistical controversy, a manifest *ignoratio elenchi*, (that is, misapprehension of the subject,) as the logicians term it. And I will take upon me to say, that an intimate acquaintance with the mind of the Spirit as delivered in holy writ, in its native simplicity and beauty, unadulterated by the traditions and inventions of men, will do more to dissipate the clouds raised by such objectors, than whole torrents of scholastic chicane and sophistry. And even in those objections, in which we cannot say there is a mistake of the subject, we shall often find a woful mistake of the natural powers and faculties of man. Nor do I know a better method of answering cavils of this nature, than that which has been so successfully employed by Bishop Butler in his admirable treatise entitled, "The Analogy of Religion natural and revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature." Now as a great many of the arguments of our sceptics and unbelievers are aimed against the genius and character of our religion, so on the other hand it is proper to observe, that to some persons of the most acute discernment and most delicate sensibility, there has appeared in this same subject, the character of religion, an intrinsic but irresistible evidence of its divinity. The spirit it breathes, the doctrines it teaches, the morals it inculcates, when candidly examined in the fountain, the New Testament, and not in the corrupted streams of human comments and systems, have an energy which no feeling heart can withstand, and which seems not to have been withstood by some who have even dared to combat all its other evidences. Of this the late Rousseau is an eminent example.

As to the second class of objections, which are levelled against the external proofs of revelation, they differ according to the different branches of evidence against which they are aimed. The two principal branches of external evidence, by which the Christian doctrine is recommended to our faith, are *prophecy* and *miracles*. The latter of these were strongly urged by the apostles for the conviction of the Gentiles; both were insisted on in their reasonings with the Jews. The pagans knew nothing of those books in which the prophecies were contained, and consequently argu-

ments drawn from these would have been unintelligible to them. Now as the miracles which were wrought in support of our religion, with us stand on the evidence of testimony conveyed in history, and as the fulfilment of most of the prophecies urged in support of the same cause, are vouched to us in the same manner, the argument with regard to miracles is entirely, and with regard to prophecy is in a great measure of the historical kind. I say with regard to prophecy it is only in a great measure historical. My reason for making the distinction is plainly this. The prophetic style hath something peculiar in it. It is both more figurative, and more obscure, than that of simple narration. Whereas therefore with regard to the performance of such a miracle, there can be only one question, and a mere question of fact, with regard to the accomplishment of such a prophecy, there naturally arise two questions. First, is the meaning of the prophecy such as hath been assigned to it? This is a question of criticism; secondly, Was the event, by which it is said to be accomplished, such as is alleged? This again is a question of fact. Before I dismiss this topic of the different ways wherein the truth of revelation has been assailed by its adversaries, it is necessary to take notice of an intermediate method, by which indeed the external proofs are struck at, but in a different manner. It is not the reality of individual facts alleged, namely miracles and prophecies, but the possibility of the kind, as being supernatural, which is made the question. Again, the fitness of these, though admitted true, to serve as evidence of doctrine, hath been also questioned. Both these inquiries are of the philosophic kind. Their solution depends on a just apprehension of the nature of evidence.

Would I, now, that you should be particularly acquainted with all the trite and all the novel topics, that have been, or are insisted on by the enemies of our religion, and that you should read and remember exactly all the most approved answers that have been made by its defenders; I should in that case be under a necessity of assigning you a very frightful task, sending you to consult an innumerable multitude of volumes, written on both sides of the question. And should any of you happen to be blest with a tenacious memory, he might in this way at very little expense of judgment, be qualified for encountering any ordinary caviller he might meet with. But in truth, the task is, in my opinion, especially for a novice in theology, both too laborious and unpleasant, and by no means sufficiently profitable, to recompense the time and pains that

would be bestowed upon it. And though I think that such controversial pieces may be perused occasionally as they fall in one's way, I would by no means recommend a regular prosecution of this study; a method which would tend only to form a habit of turning everything into matter of wrangling and logomachy, those noxious weeds, those briars and thorns with which almost all the walks of theology have been so unhappily pestered. In my judgment, a habit of this kind greatly hurts the rational powers, when in appearance it only exercises them: it doth worse; it often greatly injures an ingenuous and candid temper; it infects one with a rage of disputation, the cacoethes of pedants; it inclines the mind to hunt more for the specious than the solid, and in the ardor of the combat to sacrifice truth to victory. Not that I would dissuade any one, who may have doubts of his own, to consult impartially whatever authors may be of use to remove them, and to examine the question freely. It is not truth, but error, that shuns the light, and dreads to undergo an impartial trial. It is the liberal advice of an apostle, "prove all things; hold fast that which is good;" an advice which breathes nothing of that narrow, jealous, sectarian spirit, which hath so long and so generally prevailed among Christians of all denominations, and hath proved the greatest pest of the cause. Or in case one's situation exposes him to the attacks of wranglers, it may be necessary also on this account to furnish himself with armor where he soonest can, that he may neither be seduced by their sophisms, nor give them the appearance of a triumph at the expense of truth. But where neither of these is the case, I am not satisfied that this summary way of proceeding is the best. Would you then have the theological student to neglect this most important question, concerning the truth of revelation, the foundation of all the rest? By no means. I dissuade only from his taking this hasty way of overloading his memory with the productions of others, and with all the trash that has been hatched in disputations, idle heads. I only dissuade from this, that I may indicate the method whereby he may be enabled to search the cause itself to the bottom, and if possible to produce something of his own.

It was observed, that some of the arguments against revelation, were of a philosophic nature, deriving, or at least pretending to derive their efficacy from the sources of pneumatology, logic, ethics, and natural theology; others of an historical nature, and others critical. Let us therefore become acquainted with these several

sources, pneumatology, history, criticism, and we shall not need to see with other's eyes, and to retail by rote the answers that have been given by others. We shall be qualified to see with our own eyes, and to give answers for ourselves, arising from our own knowledge and distinct apprehension of the subject. But this, it will be said, is assigning us by much the harder task of the two. The streams are open and at hand, the fountain is often remote and hidden from our view. True indeed, and therefore without doubt it will be longer before we reach it; but when we have reached it, our work is done; whereas the streams are numberless—every day discovers some unknown before, and to examine them all severally is endless. And though the task were possible, it would not be near so satisfactory to the mind.

It has been the error of ages, and still is of the present age, that to have read much is to be very learned. There is not, I may say, a greater heresy against common sense. Reading is doubtless necessary, and it must be owned, that eminence in knowledge is not to be attained without it. But two things are ever specially to be regarded on this topic, which are these. First, that more depends on the quality of what we read, than on the quantity; secondly, more depends on the use, which by reflection, conversation, and composition we have made of what we read, than upon both the former. In whatever depends upon history, or the knowledge of languages, the materials indeed can only be furnished us by reading; but if that reading be properly conducted and improved, its influence will be very extensive. Whilst therefore it is by far the too general cry, "Read, read, commentators, systematists, paraphrasts, controvertists, demonstrations, confutations, apologies, answers, defences, replies, and ten thousand other such like," I should think the most important advice to be, "Devoutly study the scriptures themselves, if you would understand their doctrine in singleness of heart. Get acquainted with the sacred history, in all its parts—Jewish, canonical, ecclesiastic. Study the sacred languages; observe the peculiarities of their diction. Attend to the idiom of the Hebrew, and of the ancient Greek translation, between which and the style of the New Testament there is a great affinity. Study the Jewish and ancient customs, polity, laws, ceremonies, institutions, manners, and with the help of some knowledge in natural theology and the philosophy of the human mind, you will have ground to believe, that, with the blessing of God, you shall in a

great measure serve as commentators, controvertists, systematists, and in short, everything to yourselves. Without these helps, you are but bewildered and lost in the chaos of contradictory comments and opposite opinions. On the contrary, overlooking all cavils for a time, pursue the track now pointed out, and as the light from its genuine sources above mentioned breaks in upon you, the objections, like the shades of night, will vanish of themselves. Many of those objections you will discover to be founded in an ignorance of human nature and of the nature of evidence, many in an ignorance of that which is the subject of debate, the genius, the doctrine, the precepts of revelation. You will find, that many doughty combatants, who have imagined they have been performing wonders for the subversion of the cause of Christ, have been wasting all their ammunition against the traditions and inventions of men, and that the pure institution of Jesus is not one jot affected by their argument. Patience therefore we would recommend to the young student in regard to particular cavils against religion, till once he is provided of a fund of his own from which he may be enabled to perceive their futility and to refute them. The only just exceptions to this rule are those already mentioned. When objections are obtruded on him, which tend to unsettle his own mind, or which, if he is incapable of answering or eluding, may afford matter of triumph to infidelity, then it is proper to recur to the nearest methods of removing them.

But some perhaps will be ready to urge, Is not this method of yours rather preposterous? Ought we not first to be satisfied of the truth of revelation, and then enter on the examination of its contents? Its divine origin therefore is doubtless the first question, its particular doctrines come next. This, to a superficial inquirer, must appear plausible, but it is by no means just. It was observed, already, that one principal source of evidence, either in favor of revelation or against it, is its own character, and this we call the intrinsic evidence. To take the most effectual methods therefore of coming at the knowledge of its character, that is, of discovering what it contains, is in fact to take the most effectual method of studying one principal fund of evidence, either for or against it. Again, in regard to the attacks that are made upon Christianity, it is impossible we should judge, whether they be just or unjust, till we have gotten some notion of what Christianity is. This is the more necessary as we see under this identical name, things in many respects widely different, are in different places attacked. The

infidel has not quite the same object in England as in Spain, nor in Sweden as in either, nor in Switzerland as in any of the three. The case is, every assailant attaches to the name all the religious opinions generally received in the place where he resides. But if it is the institution of Christ; of the truth of which we are anxious to be ascertained, and not the glosses of our rabbies; if it is the commandments of God which excite our zeal, and not the traditions of the elders or the establishment of our legislators, it is necessary we should know before we enter on the controversy, how to make the distinction between the one and the other. This is not the only cause, though indeed it is the chief one, wherein a great deal of time and pains is worse than idly wasted, which would have been spared, if the parties had understood sufficiently the subject in debate. I shall illustrate this by a familiar example. Suppose one should undertake to prove to you, that the constitution of Great Britain is a very bad constitution in every respect. Could you imagine yourselves qualified for judging of the validity of his arguments, if you were yourselves quite ignorant, what that constitution is? You might be liable to be imposed upon by the grossest falsehoods and the vilest misrepresentations, which the bare study of that constitution itself might be sufficient to detect, and might serve abundantly to supply the place of every refutation. The method I recommend, therefore, is in fact the simplest and the most natural. It will at once, and by the same exertion on your part, instruct you in the contents and in some of the principal evidences of revelation, and thus it will both facilitate and shorten your inquiries.

To this let me add, it is the method which I have, in my own experience, found to answer best. I very early endeavored to become acquainted with the scriptures, which, from my first perusal, I saw merited a very close attention, though viewed in no higher light than as human compositions, but much more, as claiming the character of divine revelation. As I became acquainted with the original languages, and with ancient oriental usages and manners, I applied my knowledge in these, for removing obscurities and doubts, where they occurred in scripture. In some cases, I thought I succeeded, in others not. As to the last, I was not impatient, not doubting, but as the light of knowledge advanced, I should see farther and more distinctly. I can say with truth, I was not entirely disappointed. I soon after attempted the reading of controversial writers, and first those which regard the general controversy, whether the scriptures contain a revelation from God, or, which

amounts to the same, whether Christianity be a divine communication to mankind, or a mere human figment. I began with the attacks made upon our religion, as I made it a rule to hear the plea of a party first in his own language, and not in the words of an angry and perhaps uncandid antagonist. After reading an attack, if there was any thing specious in it, I considered with myself, how I should answer the principal arguments, if urged upon me by an adversary with a view to discredit religion, or if they were proposed as difficulties by a friend, who intended only the removal of his own doubts. If I found myself puzzled by the arguments, not being satisfied with any answer which occurred to myself, I had recourse, as soon as possible, to the best I could hear of from others. But it sometimes happened, on the contrary, that, on a little reflection, I thought myself able to refute the antagonist's arguments, in which case I never inquired about any answers that might have been published. In consequence of this method, I have read many more attacks upon revelation than defences of it. I carried this so far once, as to set about the publication of an answer* to a very subtle attack on the Christian religion by a late celebrated metaphysician, before I had an opportunity of perusing the work of any former answerer; a conduct which I would not recommend to any body's imitation, as it exposes one to mistakes and misrepresentations, which may easily be avoided. I shall further add on this article, that the only species of assault made against revelation, which is totally independent of its contents and history, and therefore may be previously studied and understood, is that which is aimed against the possibility of all its miraculous facts. This question is purely abstract and metaphysical, and would be the same, it must be owned, whatever the history, character or genius of our religion were.

So much for the subject in general, the different kinds of proof of which it is susceptible, and the different sorts of objections to which it is exposed. So much also for the best method of preparing ourselves for understanding the subject, with its evidence, and for refuting the objections. I shall in my next discourse consider, how we may most profitably pursue our inquiries into the different parts of the subject, and examine the controversies which these have given rise to.

* The Dissertation on Miracles in answer to Mr. Hume.

LECTURE II.

Of the Christian System—the Scriptures ought to be the first study—afterwards Systems and Commentaries may be occasionally consulted—bad consequence of beginning the study of Theology with Systems and Commentaries.

I now proceed to the consideration of the parts of the Christian system, and the controversies that have been carried on concerning the explication of these by different sects of Christians. As method tends both to accelerate and to facilitate our progress in every discussion, it will naturally occur to every considerate person, that some methodical digest of the tenets and precepts contained in our Bible would be at least a matter of great expediency. That it is not of absolute necessity we may warrantably conclude from this undeniable fact, that there neither is any such digest in scripture, nor was there in the church in the earliest and purest times. But on the other hand these considerations are no arguments against its utility. God, in the economy of grace, as in the economy of nature, supplies man with all the materials necessary for his support and well being, but at the same time requires the exercise of those faculties with which he hath endowed him, for turning those materials to the best account. Thus much may be said in apology for system makers of different denominations, many of whom I doubt not have intended well, whose success in this department we cannot at all admire. So it is, however, that we have great plenty of systems in many things flatly contradicting one another, all pretending to be founded on, or at least conformable to, the doctrine of holy writ. Amid such variety how is the young student to proceed? Must he begin with adopting implicitly one of these pretended treasures of Christian doctrine, studying assiduously both the theoretic part and the practical as the standard of truth, as the very quintessence of our divine institution; must he learn from it and from such commentators as are coincident in their religious sentiments, to understand the scriptures, to ascertain the sense of every thing that appears ambiguous, to solve every thing that is difficult, and to enlighten every thing that is obscure? On the other hand, what security shall our young pupil have, that the guide who has been assigned to him is equal to the office? How shall he know that he is not following the train of a mere ignis fatuus, instead of the direction of a heavenly luminary? You cannot say, he may arrive at this knowledge from scripture, for by the hypothesis,

which is indeed conformable to the general practice almost every where, the young student is from this teacher to learn to understand the scripture, not from scripture to learn to judge of this teacher; for where this last to be the case, he must be previously acquainted with the mind of the spirit as manifested in the scriptures, and not take the mind of the spirit on the word of his teacher.

Ay, but the teacher we assign him, say they, is celebrated for knowledge and piety, and is of great reputation among the orthodox as an orthodox divine. As to his knowledge and piety, are we to sustain ourselves perfect judges of these accomplishments, or have not pedantry and hypocrisy sometimes imposed even upon the generality of men? But admitting that the character you give him were in both respects perfectly just, do even these qualifications, however valuable, secure a man against error either in doctrine or practice? Have not several, whom in charity we are bound to think both knowing and pious, maintained in many instances opposite opinions, each extremely positive as to his own, and extremely zealous in defence of it? And as to orthodox, I should be glad to know the meaning of the epithet. Nothing, you say, can be plainer. The orthodox are those who in religious matters entertain right opinions; be it so. How then is it possible I should know who they are that entertain right opinions, before I know what opinions are right? I must therefore unquestionably know orthodoxy, before I can know or judge who are orthodox. Now to know the truths of religion, which you call orthodox, is the very end of my inquiries, and am I to begin these inquiries on the presumption, that without any inquiry I know it already? Besides, is this thing which you call orthodoxy, a thing in which mankind are universally agreed insomuch that it would seem to be entitled to the privilege of an axiom or first principle to be assumed without proof? Quite the reverse. There is nothing about which men have been, and still are, more divided. It has been accounted orthodox divinity in one age, which hath been branded as ridiculous fanaticism in the next. It is at this day deemed the perfection of orthodoxy in one country, which in an adjacent country is looked upon as damnable heresy. Nay in the same country hath not every sect a standard of their own? Accordingly when any person seriously uses the word, before we can understand his meaning, we must know to what communion he belongs. When that is known, we comprehend him perfectly. By the orthodox he means always those who agree in opinion with him and his party, and by the heterodox those who differ from him. When one says then, of any teacher whatever,

that all the orthodox acknowledge his orthodoxy, he says neither more nor less than this, "all who are of the same opinion with him, of which number I am one, believe him to be in the right." And is this any thing more, than what may be asserted by some person or other, of every teacher that ever did or ever will exist? "Words," it was well said by a philosopher of the last age, "are the counters of wise men and the money of fools." And when they are contrived on purpose to render persons parties or opinions the objects of admiration or of abhorrence, the multitude are very susceptible of the impression intended to be conveyed by them, without entering at all, or ever inquiring into the meaning of the words. And to say the truth, we have but too many ecclesiastic terms and phrases, which savour grossly of the arts of a crafty priesthood, who meant to keep the world in ignorance, to secure an implicit faith in their own dogmas, and to intimidate men from an impartial inquiry into holy writ.

But would you then lay aside systems altogether, as useless or even dangerous? By no means. But I am not for beginning with them. I am even not for entering on their examination, till one has become in the way formerly recommended, if not a critic, at least a considerable proficient in the scripture. 'Tis only thus, we can establish to ourselves a rule by which we are to judge of the truth or falsehood of what they affirm. 'Tis only thus, that we bring systems to be tried at the bar of scripture, and not scripture to be tried at theirs. 'Tis only thus we can be qualified to follow the advice of the prophet in regard to all the teachers without exception, "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, they have no truth in them." 'Tis only thus, we can imitate the noble example set us by the wise Bereans, in exact conformity to the prophet's order, of whom we learn, that they did not admit the truth of Christ's doctrine even on the testimony of his apostles, but having candidly heard what they said, "searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were so." 'Tis only thus, we can avoid the reproach of calling other men *καθηγῆται* masters, leaders, dictators, to the manifest derogation of the honor due to our only master, leader and dictator, Christ. 'Tis only thus, we can avoid incurring the reproach thrown upon the Pharisees, concerning whom God says, "their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men."

But then it will be said, if the scriptures are to be our first study, will it not be necessary, that, even in reading them, we take the

aid of some able commentator? Perhaps I shall appear somewhat singular in my way of thinking, when I tell you in reply, that I would not have you at first recur to any of them. Do not mistake me, as though I meant to signify, that there is no good to be had from commentaries. I am far from judging thus of commentaries in general, any more than of systems. But neither are proper for the beginner, whose object it is impartially to search out the mind of the spirit, and not to imbibe the scheme of any dogmatist. Almost every commentator hath his favorite system, which occupies his imagination, biasses his understanding, and more or less tinges all his comments. The only assistances which I would recommend, are those in which there can be no tendency to warp your judgment. It is the serious and frequent reading of the divine oracles, accompanied with fervent prayer; it is the comparing of scripture with scripture; it is the diligent study of the languages in which they are written; it is the knowledge of those histories and antiquities to which they allude. These indeed will not tell you what you are to judge of every passage, and so much the better. God hath given you judgment, and requires you to exercise it. "And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" If sufficient light is brought to you, and if you have eyes wherewith to see, will you not take the trouble to use them, and observe what is before you; must you be told every thing as though you were blind or in utter darkness? The helps, therefore, which I recommend, are such as pronounce nothing concerning the import of holy writ, but only increase the light by means of which the sense may be discovered. The student I would have in a great measure to be self taught, a well conducted attempt at which, is, in my opinion, the true way of preparing himself for being taught of God. Whoever thinks that this method will not do, ought openly and honestly to disclaim the principle, that "the scriptures are able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Such a one on the contrary hath in effect, whatever he may imagine, abandoned the protestant doctrine of the perspicuity and absolute sufficiency of scripture. He hath not entirely purged out the old leaven, but retains a hankering after some human and unerring interpreter. If he differs with Rome, it is not really about the needfulness of the office, but about the person or persons who shall fill it.

Let us consider a little the consequences of the other method, which indeed is by far the most common, not only with papists but

even with Protestants of all denominations, and which I would call beginning our theological studies where they should end, with systems and commentaries. To what other cause can we justly impute it, that so much of implicit faith, so much of unrelenting bigotry, and so many divisions prevail in the Christian world, especially among the pastors themselves, those who ought to be the foremost in propagating more liberal sentiments of the Gospel of Christ? The young student, new come from college, where he was taken up with other matters, enters on the study of theology quite raw and unexperienced. He is told, if a Protestant, that the whole of his religion is contained in the Bible; and even, if a Romanist, he is informed that the scriptures are inspired and consequently true, and that they contain many at least of the christian doctrines. The foundation is laid by some favourite system of the party to which he belongs, which is warmly recommended by him who has the direction of his studies. When that is done, he is desirous to commence the study of holy writ. He begins, and as may be naturally expected, being quite a stranger to the character of the nation to whom the sacred writers belonged and of whom they write, knowing nothing of their polity, laws, customs, manners, ceremonies, to which there are so frequent allusions, and having but a smattering of the sacred languages, and nothing of the idiom, he is often puzzled to find out the sense. If his former reading do him no prejudice, it is well; much good is not to be expected from it. Impatient to get rid of his perplexity, and to know every thing as he proceeds, some expositor must be consulted. An expositor will be got that shall corroborate the effect produced by the system. If the place of his residence be Rome, one interpreter is put into his hands; if it happen to be Moscow, another; if Oxford, a third; if London, a fourth; and if Geneva, very probably one who differs in his sentiments from all the four. Having no criterion of his own, whereby he can form a judgment of the justness of their interpretation, and having an unbounded trust in the wisdom of his tutor, and the penetration of the authors he has recommended, he easily adopts in every thing their explications and solutions. His vacant mind, like what the lawyers call a *derelictum*, is claimed in property by the first occupant. That author, and others of the same party, commonly keep possession ever after. To the standard set up by them, every passage in scripture must by all the arts of distorting, mutilating, torturing, be made conformable, and by

the same standard all other authors and interpreters must be pronounced good or bad, orthodox or heretical. This is the true origin of bigotry, and that bitterness of spirit with which it is invariably accompanied. I do not deny, that there are other causes, secular views for instance which co-operate with those prepossessions and prejudices in supporting such a variety of opinions among Christians. But I affirm, that it is chiefly imputable to this preposterous method of imbibing opinions implicitly, before we are capable to form a judgment. For when we have no principles of critical knowledge, we have no rule by which to choose, but must be at the mercy of the first interpreter who falls in our way. And of the tenets, which he has dictated, we soon come to think ourselves bound, in honor and conscience, to be the zealous defenders ever after.

But what would you have us to do? Must we give up with all systems, commentaries, paraphrases, and the like? I say not so entirely, though I by no means think the regular study of them ought to be begun with. When we have made some progress in the scriptural science, we may consult them occasionally, we have then provided ourselves in some principles, by which we may examine them. And let us not confine ourselves to those of one side only, but freely consult those of every side. This we must do, if we would constitute scripture the umpire in the controversy, and not bring it to be tried at the bar of some system maker or commentator. The young student ought habitually to remember, that every man is fallible in judgment, as well as in conduct, and that no man can any more pretend to an exemption from error, than to an immunity from sin. And in this respect, as well as in others, we may well apply the admonition of the psalmist. "Trust not in princes, even chief men," as the word imports in point of erudition as well as authority, "nor in the sons of men. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes." When a Romanist tells me, "The method you recommend is extremely dangerous; the scriptures are even in the most important articles obscure and ambiguous; you are therefore in the most imminent danger of being misled by them, unless you are first provided in a sound and approved guide;" when, I say, a person of the Romish communion addresseth himself to me in this manner, however much I differ from him in judgment, truth compels me to acknowledge, that he speaks in character and maintains a perfect consistency with the avowed principles of his sect. But when a Protestant holds the

same language, I must pronounce him the most inconsistent creature upon earth. He deserts all those principles of the perspicuity and sufficiency of scripture in things essential to salvation, and of the right of private judgment, which served as the great foundation of his dissent from Rome. The confidence, which Rome requires that you should put in the dictates of a church, which she believes, or professes to believe to be infallible, this man, much more absurdly, requires you to put in those men of whom he owns, that they had no more security against error than you have yourself.

But in reading the scripture, when difficulties occur, what are we to do, or what can we do better, than immediately recur to some eminent interpreter? Perhaps the answer I am going to give, will appear astonishing, as I know it is unusual. If you are not able, with the strictest attention and reflection to solve the difficulty yourself, do not make it a rule to seek an immediate solution of it from some other quarter. Have patience, and as you grow acquainted with the scope of the whole by frequent and attentive reading, you will daily find fewer difficulties; they will vanish of themselves. The more perspicuous parts will insensibly reflect a light on the more obscure. If you had the helps to be obtained from history, geography, the knowledge of the manners and polity of the people, which in effect are perfectly coincident with the study of the language, and which may all be comprehended in these two sources, sacred history and biblical philology, you will be daily fitter, as I said before, for being interpreters for yourselves. And I will take upon me to say, that if this method were universally pursued, and all temporal interests were out of the question, the differences in opinion about the sense of scripture would be inconsiderable. In that case, there would not be one controversy among the disciples of Jesus, where at present there are fifty. And there would be no such thing as classing ourselves under different leaders, which has been so long the disgrace of the christian name. We can read the rebuke which Paul gives to the Corinthians, for distinguishing themselves thus in the true spirit of sectarism, one saying, "I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, a third I am of Cephas," and we remain insensible all the while, that the rebuke strikes much more severely against us, than it did against them. Has not this been universally the method in the Christian world for many ages? I am an adherent of the Roman pontiff, says one, and I of the patriarch of Constantinople, says another. And among Protestants one says, I am of Luther, another I am of Calvin, a third I am of Ar-

minius. Ay, but were not some of these, men of the most respectable characters? None is more ready to acknowledge it. But were not Paul and Peter and Apollos, the apostles and first ministers of Christ, also men of the most respectable characters? Yet with what warmth and indignation do we see one of themselves disclaiming a distinction, which he accounts injurious to the honor of his Master, and subversive of his cause. But to proceed. The disciple in each sect is first instructed in the principles or system of their respective leader, and afterwards with the assistance of what they call an orthodox commentator, that is a zealous partisan of the sect, he is sent to the study of scripture. The first object is manifestly to make him of the party, the second to make him a Christian, or compounding both views together, to make him just such a Christian, and so far only, as is compatible with the principles of the party. The effect sufficiently demonstrates the absurdity of the method. All of them almost, without exception, of the most opposite sects and most discordant principles, when thus prepared, find without difficulty their several systems supported in scripture, and every other system but their own condemned. How unsafe then must it be to trust in men! When we thus implicitly follow a guide before inquiry, if we should even happen to be in the right, it is, with regard to us, a matter purely accidental. No Protestant dares advance the same thing with regard to searching the scriptures, because in doing this we obey the express command of Him, whose authority, in profession at least, all Protestants hold to be more venerable, that even that of the founders of their several sects.

But when is it, then, that you would think it proper to recur to systems and commentators? The answer is plain. After you have acquired such an insight into the spirit and sentiments of sacred writ, that you are capable of forming some judgment of the conformity or contrariety of the doctrine of these authors to that infallible standard. With the examination of such human compositions, the studies of the theologian ought, in my judgment, to be concluded and not begun. The disciple of the Son of God ought, above all men, to be able with regard to merely human teachers to apply to himself the words of the poet,

*Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.**

* Sworn to no master.

I shall even suppose, that we could put an interpreter into your hands, who would always guide you right, and this is more than any man, that does not claim infallibility, can pretend to do. Yet even in that case, I am not satisfied, that this would be the best method for the young student to take, in order to arrive at the understanding of the scriptures. To learn, seems, with many, to imply no more than a bare exercise of memory. To read, and to remember is, they imagine, all they have to do. I affirm, on the contrary, that a great deal more is necessary, as to exercise the judgment and the discursive faculty. I shall put the case, that one were employed to teach you algebra; and instead of instructing you in the manner of stating and resolving algebraic equations, he should think it incumbent on him, only to inform you of all the principal problems, that had at any time exercised the art of the most famous algebraists, and the solutions they had given; and being possessed of a retentive memory, I shall suppose, you have a distinct remembrance both of the questions and the answers; could you, for this, be said to have learnt algebra? No, surely. To teach you that ingenious and useful art, is to instruct you in those principles, by the proper application of which, you shall be enabled to solve the questions for yourselves. In like manner, to teach you to understand the scriptures, is to initiate you into those general principles, which will gradually enable you of yourselves, to enter into their sense and spirit. It is not to make you repeat by rote the judgments of others, but to bring you to form judgments of your own; to see with your own eyes, and not with other people's. I shall conclude this prelection with the translation of a short passage from the Persian letters, which falls in entirely with my present subject. Rica having been to visit the library of a French convent, writes thus to his friend in Persia concerning what had passed. Father, said I to the librarian, what are these huge volumes which fill the whole side of the library? These, said he, are the Interpreters of the scriptures. There is a prodigious number of them, replied I; the scriptures must have been very dark formerly and very clear at present. Do there remain still any doubts? Are there now any points contested? Are there, answered he with surprise, Are there? There are almost as many as there are lines. You astonish me, said I, what then have all these authors been doing? These authors, returned he, never searched the scriptures, for what ought to be believed, but for what they did believe themselves. They did not consider them as a book, wherein were contained the doc-

trines which they ought to receive, but as a work which might be made to authorize their own ideas. For this reason, they have corrupted all the meanings, and have put every passage to the torture, to make it speak their own sense. 'Tis a country whereon people of all sects make invasions, and go for pillage; it is a field of battle, where when hostile nations meet, they engage, attack and skirmish in a thousand different ways.

My next discourse will relate chiefly to the advantages resulting from a proper study of holy writ, the manner of conducting it, particularly with this view, that the student may form to himself a digest of its doctrine.

LECTURE III.

How the Student ought to set about the Examination of the Scriptures—Directions for forming an Abstract of the Doctrine of Holy Writ.

IN my last discourse I purposed to show, that if it was our chief aim, in spiritual matters, to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, to be instructed in the unadulterated doctrine of Christ, we must have recourse to the fountain itself, the sacred scriptures, and begin our studies there. If, on the contrary, like the Pharisees in our Saviour's time, we place unbounded confidence in our several rabbies, the founders of sects and builders of systems; if we are desirous of seeing only with their eyes, that is, in other words, if we are more solicitous to be their followers than the followers of Christ, and think ourselves safer under their guidance, though acknowledged to be merely human and fallible, than under that of the infallible spirit of truth; if this, I say, be our principal purpose, we ought doubtless to pursue the contrary method, and make it our first care to be thoroughly instructed in the traditionary dogmas, glosses, comments of that particular champion under whose banners we choose to enlist ourselves, and by whose name we are carnal and mean enough to glory in being distinguished. And after we have sufficiently imbibed all his sublimated theories and subtile ratiocinations, we may venture safely on the study of scripture; we are in no danger of being disturbed by it. Sufficient care will have been taken to prevent our receiving any light from that quarter, that shall serve to undeceive us, and we are as secure as any Pharisee whatever, that if the word of God should contradict our tradi-

tions, the former shall give place to the latter, and be rendered of no effect. I believe there are few, who will in so many words avow this to be their plan. But that it is, in fact, the plan of by far the greater number in every region of the Christian world, the effect but too plainly demonstrates. It is wonderful, that the consequences of this method in fixing people unalterably in the opinions good or bad which were first infused into them, and in making them view every thing in that light only which will favour their own prepossessions, have not opened the eyes of mankind as to its impropriety. Can that method be esteemed a good one, which all the world sees, or may see, if they will, is equally adapted to promote truth or error, sense or nonsense; which makes a man to the full as tenacious of positions the most absurd, as of those that are most reasonable, and serves to pervert the only rule, acknowledged by all sides to be unerring, into a mere engine for giving authority to the visions and theories of any dogmatist, who has gotten the first possession of our heads? Is it not in consequence of this, that those of other denominations are astonished to find, that we cannot discover their principles in scripture, and that we are just as much astonished to find, that they cannot there discover ours?

But I am aware of one objection my doctrine is exposed to, which must at least be owned to be specious. If so many men of distinguished learning and abilities have failed in the attempt of explaining scripture, and forming systems of the Christian revelation, how can I (may our young student argue) who, in comparison of these, must acknowledge myself to be both illiterate and weak, hope to succeed in reaching the sense of holy writ, and forming to myself a digest of its doctrine? That many such, as are now mentioned, have failed in the attempt, is manifest from this, the innumerable systems and commentaries extant, which in many things flatly contradict one another, whilst each author supports his own side with great appearance of subtlety and display of erudition. Were this objection to be admitted in all its force, I know not by what kind of logic any person could conclude from it, that it were better to choose without examining, than to examine before we choose. The latter may be right, the former must be wrong. That men of great literary fame have failed, can never be a good reason for trusting implicitly to such.

But I insist upon it, that when examined to the bottom, there will not be found so much in the objection, as is supposed. The usefulness of some branches of learning for the more perfect under-

standing of scripture is indeed undeniable. Is it because the doctrine of revelation is abstruse and metaphysical, and therefore not to be apprehended by any, who have not been accustomed to the most profound and abstract researches? By no means. The character, which holy writ gives of its own doctrine, is the very reverse of this. It is pure and plain, such as "enlighteneth the eyes and maketh wise the simple." The institution to be given by the Messiah, is represented by the prophets, as "a highway so patent that the way-faring men though fools should not mistake it," and as an intimation written in so large and legible a character "that he who runs may read." And Paul, in order to signify to us, that there was nothing of difficult investigation in this doctrine, and that the knowledge of it was easily attainable by those who were willing to hear and learn it from the apostles of Christ, says concerning it, "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise. Say not in thine heart who shall ascend into heaven, (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." And indeed the apostle doth in this, but apply to the new dispensation the same character of plainness and perspicuity, which Moses had formerly affirmed of the old. "This commandment," said he, "which I command thee, this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Nor indeed would it be one jot less absurd, to suppose, that in order to attain this divine instruction we should be under the necessity of diving into the depths of human systems, rummaging the recesses of voluminous commentators, or exploring the fine spun speculations of idle theorists, than that we should be obliged to scale the heavens or to cross the seas. It is not therefore on account of any thing abstruse or difficult in the matter itself, that learning is of importance; nor is it for the acquisition of the most essential truths, which are ever the most perspicuous. But its importance to the theologian ariseth from these two considerations; first, that he may be qualified for the defence of religion against the assaults, to which, either in

whole or in part, it is exposed from its adversaries; secondly, that he may become more and more a proficient in the sacred style and idiom, and be thereby enabled to enter with greater quickness into all the sentiments of the inspired writers. The languages of holy writ are now dead languages. Learning of one kind is necessary to attain an acquaintance with them, and consequently with those things which they contain, however perspicuously expressed. In the infant state of the church, miraculous gifts, especially the gift of tongues, and that of prophecy, superseded the necessity of human learning altogether. Now that these are withdrawn, we cannot hope to be perfectly acquainted with the mind of the Spirit, till by the use of the ordinary means, which God hath put in our power, and requires us to employ, we come to understand the language which he speaks. And, as hath been observed already, the history and criticism, which we have recommended, are nothing else, but the natural aids towards such a proficiency in the sacred tongues. This however is a species of knowledge, which it requires no extraordinary genius or talents to enable us to attain. Common sense, time, and application, will do the business. Eminent talents, if they get a wrong direction, will make us err more widely than we should have done with moderate abilities. In travelling, if we happen to mistake our road, the swifter our motion is, we shall in equal time go so much the farther wrong. But as there is a kind of learning, that is solid and useful to the theologian, there is a kind also, which is visionary and hurtful to him. Of this sort are the abstract philosophy, the ancient dialectic and ontology, which universally for a succession of ages reigned in the schools as the perfection of science, the summit of human wisdom; to whose usurped authority even the Christian theology itself hath been most unnaturally subjected, and with whose chains and fetters she still appears more or less encumbered in all the most celebrated systems of our different sects. Disregarding the apostles' warning, men, however they differed in other things, seem to have agreed in this, in "spoiling the doctrine of their master, with philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This artificial logic or science of disputation was at bottom no other than a mere playing with hard words, used indeed grammatically and according to certain rules established in the schools, but quite insignificant, and therefore incapable of conveying knowledge. 'Tis in the language of our poet,

Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy,

and in the still more emphatic language of our apostle, "vain janglings and oppositions of science falsely so called, which minister strife and contention, but tend not in the least to godly edifying." Thus much I thought it necessary to observe in order to prevent our thinking of men above what we ought to think, and particularly to prevent our valuing them for those acquisitions which were in act an obstruction to their advancement in spiritual knowledge, and not a furtherance.

But it will be asked, and the question is extremely pertinent, In what manner and with what frame of spirit ought we to set about the examination of the scriptures? An attention to this is of so much the greater consequence, that if many have failed in this undertaking, we have the strongest reason to believe, that the failure is more justly chargeable on the heart than on the head, on the want of that disposition, which if it invariably accompany our inquiries, we have the greatest reason to hope they shall be crowned with success. The first thing, then, I would here take notice of as an indispensable requisite, is *sincerity*. By this I mean, an habitual and predominant desire in the inquirer to discover in scripture not what may serve to authorize his own ideas, and give a sanction to the cobwebs of his own fancy, or of the fancy of others which he has adopted, but what is the genuine mind and will of God, however unacceptable it may prove to flesh and blood, in order that he may believe and practise it. It is this which our Lord hath termed "a single eye," opposing it to an eye that is vitiated and diseased, concerning which he hath assured us, that "if our eye be single, our whole body shall be full of light." And to the same purpose it is, that he elsewhere affirms that "if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." If this be the real, the primary purpose of the student's inquiries, he shall have no reason to dread success. "For the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." It is in the same way we must interpret the words of the prophet, "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." The term, the wise, as opposed to the wicked, it is well known, doth in the scripture idiom always denote, they who sincerely serve and honour God; "for to man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."

The second quality requisite in the examiner of sacred writ, is *humility*. This is to be understood as opposed to pride and an

overweening conceit of our own discernment and acuteness, than which I know not a more unteachable quality in any pupil. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit; there is more hope of a fool than of him." As this disposition of humbleness of mind leads to a modest diffidence of oneself, it powerfully inclines on the other hand to recur frequently to the Father of lights, by fervent prayer and supplication, for light and guidance in his way. Those possessed of this engaging frame of spirit, are characterized in holy writ under the several epithets of the meek, the humble, and the lowly. As when we are told, that "God will guide the meek in judgment, and the meek he will teach his way." God resisteth "the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." And though the Lord be "high, yet he hath respect to the lowly." And in order to inculcate the necessity of this temper in every genuine disciple, our Lord hath said, "Whosoever will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein." The apostle employs a still bolder figure, where he says, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

The third and last quality I shall mention, is *patience*. Nothing can more endanger our forming false conclusions in any study, which we are prosecuting, than impatience and precipitancy in our advances. Our very zeal and ardour itself, which is a commendable quality in every laudable pursuit, is apt to mislead us, unless checked by this virtue as a bridle. In spiritual, as in secular matters, God requires of us the use of those means, which he hath put in our power; and to serve as a motive to our obedience in this, he hath given us the promise of his Spirit to assist us. Now all means operate gradually; time therefore is necessary, which requires patient and repeated application. And as to the promises which God hath graciously given for our encouragement, it is our duty in regard to this, as well as in regard to every other promise, to wait patiently on him, in the persuasion, that he will not withhold what instruction is requisite, any more than other good things from them who seek him. It was said by an heathen poet, *Φρονεῖν οἱ ταχὺς ἐκ ἀσφαλείς*, Those who are in haste to know, seldom take the surest road. If this may be asserted in general, much more may it in the present case. The young student is so much exposed, both from what he hath occasion to see, and from what he hath occasion to hear, to have the opinions of others obtruded upon him, before he is in a capacity to decide, that it is not easy to resist

giving perhaps too hasty an assent, when these opinions shall appear to be plausibly supported. Nay sometimes his good qualities themselves, his candour, his confidence in the judgment of those who are older and wiser than himself, may betray him into this fault. But he ought to remember, that till he have acquired the first principles of the critical knowledge of the sacred idiom, he is not, in dubious matters, a competent judge either of plausibility or truth. The dogmatism of others, instead of engaging an easier assent, ought to render their opinions the more suspected. This patient cautiousness in judging will be also an excellent guard against his being seduced by an immoderate attachment either to antiquity or to novelty; extremes which are differently affected by different tempers. Some are more ready to adopt an opinion implicitly, because it is ancient, others, because it is new. Both are faulty, though in my judgment the latter is the greater fault of the two. Errors may doubtless be very old, that there are many such we know; but truths in religion natural or revealed cannot be entirely new. And even with regard to the explications that may be given of particular passages of scripture, it is always a shrewd presumption against them, if there is reason to believe that, in the course of so many centuries, they never occurred before. At the same time it must be owned on the other hand, that no prescription can be pleaded for any tenets whatever, in opposition to reason and to common sense. The great aim of scriptural knowledge is to clear the truth from that load of rubbish, with which in the track of ages it hath been in a great measure overwhelmed, through the continued decline of piety and good sense, and through the increase of barbarism, and the gradual introduction of a monstrous species of superstition, a heterogeneous and motley mixture of something of the form of Christianity (whose name it dishonoured) with the beggarly elements of the Jews, and the idolatrous fopperies of the Pagans, whence hath resulted a general character of more inveterate malignity, than either Judaism or Paganism of any form ever manifested. And notwithstanding the inestimable advantages which we derive from the reformation, and the revival of letters in Europe, we have reason still to talk of the state of religion in our day, and the tincture it retains of Romish corruption and the Romish spirit, in much the same way as Horace did of the state of civilization in his,

In longum tamen ævum
Manserunt, hodieque manent vestigia *Romæ*.*

* The vestiges of Rome long remained; and they still remain.

So much for the most essential characters of upright intention, modest diffidence, and patient perseverance, with which our study of holy writ ought to be accompanied.

The next thing I should consider is, the manner in which we ought to prosecute this study, that we may most effectually attain the end. When I was on the subject of the Jewish history, I observed the propriety of accompanying the reading of this, as we have it in the Old Testament, with the perusal of those uninspired writers of antiquity, whose subject bore any relation to that recorded in the sacred text; and particularly I recommended the careful reading of Josephus, the Jewish historian. I observed the propriety of parcelling out the history into periods, and accustoming yourselves to compose abstracts of them severally as you proceed, which will tend at once greatly to increase your knowledge of scripture, to improve your memory, and to produce very useful habits both of reflection and of composition. I must now add, that as one great view is to habituate you to the scripture idiom, you ought not to satisfy yourselves with reading the Bible in the vulgar translation, but ought regularly to have recourse to the original. Though you should prescribe yourselves but a small portion every day, if you can but persevere in the practice, you will improve very sensibly, and find the task at last grow very easy. The portion of the Old Testament which you first read in Hebrew, I would have you next carefully peruse in Greek in the septuagint translation. Nothing can be of greater consequence for forming the young student to a thorough apprehension of the style of the New Testament. And it may be worth his while to remark the most considerable differences in these two principal exemplars of the Old. When he is puzzled as to the literal or grammatical sense, he may recur to some other translation either into Latin or any modern language which he happens to understand. This, for the beginner, is a much better method, than to recur to commentators. To canvass the reasonings of the latter belongs to maturer age, and is proper only for those, who, to adopt the style of the apostle, have, by reason of use, their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. A point of great moment, in my eyes, and which I cannot sufficiently inculcate, is ever to give scope to the student's own reflections, and not (as is the too common method) to preclude all reflections of his own, by perpetually obtruding upon him the reflections of others. He must not conceive study to be purely the furnishing of his memory, but much more the sharpening of his attention, the exercising of his judgment, and the acqui-

ing a habit of considering every subject that comes under his review carefully and impartially on every side. When the young student is possessed of a natural good taste and quickness of discernment, it were a pity, not to put him into that track, which might qualify him in time for being an expositor to himself, and to leave him in the power of the first he happens to meet with, or at least of that commentator who has the knack of setting off his opinions in the most plausible manner.*

But left to himself in this way, will he not be liable often to commit mistakes? 'Tis probable he will, and what then? Can you insure him against them, by the assistance of any author you can assign him? Besides, the mistakes he commits through the exercise of his own judgment when imperfect, he will correct as his judgment improves; whereas the errors he falls into through an implicit faith in the judgment of others, are confirmed by habit, a lazy habit, which effectually prevents that improvement of the judging faculty, which would correct them. Would you never trust a child to his own legs, would you always carry him for fear he should fall? If you shall use him thus, till he arrive at manhood, 'tis a thousand to one he shall never be able to walk in his life time. And had it not been better, that he had caught a thousand falls, and been allowed to recover himself again the best way he could, than that he should never acquire the right use of his limbs? And is not the exercise of the mental faculties, as necessary to their improvement, as of the corporeal?

But to return; another method I would recommend to our young student when difficulties occur about the literal sense of any text, for it is here that his inquiries should begin, let him consult the parallel places in scripture, that is, those passages wherein the same subject is treated, or those at least, wherein there is some allusion or reference to it. Another useful expedient for bringing him acquainted with the idiom of the sacred writers, and for habituating him to read with attention, and to judge with proper circumspection is, as he proceeds in his study, to mark the different senses in which some of the principal words occur in scripture, and the particular circumstances in the context, which serve to determine the sense. For assisting him in acquiring a more perfect knowledge of the Jewish polity and customs, there are several pieces which will be of use, besides those I have had occasion formerly to mention. Such are *Vitringa De Synagoga vetere*, *Re-*

* See note at the end of this lecture, p. 54.

land de rebus sacris Judeorum, Lewis' *Antiquities of the Hebrew Republic*, Godwin's *Moses and Aaron*, Cunæus *de republica Hebræorum*, Bertram *de republica Judaica*, Buxtorf's *Lexicon talmudicum*, which may be consulted occasionally where it can be had, and for their modern customs, the last mentioned author's *Synagoga Judaica*. As greater proficiency is made, recourse may be had to *Selden* and *Spencer*. Afterwards the scholia on the New Testament of such a writer as Lightfoot may be consulted, who has particularly applied himself to turn his Hebrew and Rabbinical learning to the enlightening of the sacred scriptures, and which he has for that reason named *Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ*. I do not name so many authors, as thinking it of importance that you should see and read them all, but because it may fall in the way of some of you to light on one of them, and others on another, that you might take the opportunity when you can. For if you should not happen to meet with any of these for some time, I am far from thinking that great progress may not be made by your own application only, with the assistance of the original languages, and the translation of the Septuagint above mentioned. I would never have any young man, who has a tolerable capacity, and is willing to use it, to be discouraged for want of books.

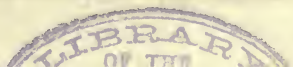
I put you upon a method formerly of making an abstract of the sacred history, as you advance in your reading; I come now to suggest what may be of use for forming to yourselves an abstract of the doctrine of holy writ. This task indeed requires much greater proficiency than the former, and therefore ought by no means to be so early undertaken. The former may be executed gradually as you proceed in reading; by composing a narrative of the principal events in each period immediately after you have read the history of it in the Bible, and before you begin to peruse the account of the succeeding. But as to a summary of doctrine, one ought to be pretty well versed in the whole scriptures both of Old and New Testaments, before he attempt it. When the student sets about a design of this kind, he may pursue some such method as the following. As God is the great object of religious worship and service, it is proper to begin with inquiring, what is the doctrine of sacred writ concerning *the divine nature and perfections*. Let him take the assistance of a concordance when his memory fails, and carefully collate all the clearest and most explicit passages on every several topic, extracting from the whole a brief summary of what relates both to the natural and moral attributes of the Deity,

as they are commonly, though not so properly, distinguished, such as the spirituality, unity, eternity, immutability, and sovereignty of God, his omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, his wisdom, justice, truth, and goodness. In expressing what relates to each of these, let him adhere as close as possible to the style of scripture, only avoiding metaphorical and figurative expressions, and rendering these, where he meets with them, by the plainest and simplest terms which can convey the sense. Let him next proceed to the doctrine of holy writ, concerning *the creation of the world* and *the divine providence*. Let him still in the same manner, and with the scriptures alone for his rule and guide, consider in the third place *human nature*, particularly noting what is delivered concerning these three articles, the state of man immediately after the creation, the fall, and its consequences. The fourth point will be the doctrine concerning *the Messiah*, or Son of God, all which may be comprised under these articles, his pre-existence and divinity, his state of suffering, including his incarnation, his character, his ministry on earth, his death and burial, and thirdly, his succeeding state of glory, including his resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and second coming, together with the purposes which the several particulars were intended to answer. The fifth point will be the doctrine concerning *the Holy Spirit*, which may be all comprised in two articles, what he is, and what he does. The sixth point, which in the order of nature should immediately follow the mediation of the Son and ministration of the Spirit, is that great end to which both are directed, *the regeneration* or recovery of man. On this head may be considered, the external means, their use, their difference under different dispensations, and their connexion with the effect produced. The seventh point will be the doctrine concerning *the world to come*. This may be subdivided into five articles, the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, the general resurrection, the future judgment, heaven and hell. The eighth and last point, the doctrine which scripture gives concerning itself, comprehending two articles, first *what is scripture*, secondly, *what is its authority*. The eighth general heads (which for memory's sake I shall repeat) are the following, *God, the creation, man, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, the regeneration, the world to come, the scriptures*.

In framing the compendious digest above proposed, there are some things, which I would have the student particularly careful of. The first is, not to have recourse to any human, that is to say

any foreign aid whatever, but to confine himself entirely to the revealed word. He must have it deeply rooted in his mind, that the question, he is concerned in resolving, is not what is the doctrine of this or the other learned man, of this or the other sect or party, but what, to the best of his judgment, is the doctrine of the sacred volume. What have I to do, should he say, to take this doctrine upon trust and at second hand, when I have access to the fountain itself? If this book was given of God as a rule to all men, it must be in things essential, level to the capacity of all. Shall I take the mind of the Creator on the report of the creature, when, if I will I have the opportunity of hearing the voice of the Creator himself?

The second thing is, not to indulge a disposition to speculate on points, which cannot with any propriety be said to be revealed. Sometimes events are mentioned, and a profound silence is observed as to the cause. Sometimes we are told of operations, but not a word of the manner of conducting them. Our information goes just so far and no farther. It is of the nature of our present state, and coincides with the design of our author, that here we should know in part only, that here we should see darkly as through a glass. Let us not vainly seek to be wise in divine things, above what is written. Let us ever stop where revelation stops; and not pretend to move one single inch beyond it. It is chiefly by indulging the contrary practice, and giving way to the airy excursions of an inventive imagination, that all our system-builders, without exception, have more or less wandered from the mark. The question which I have to resolve (the student ought thus to argue with himself) is not what doctrine I should think reasonable or probable, but what is the doctrine contained in this book? However different therefore in other respects, it is as much a question of fact, what is the doctrine of the Bible, as it would be, if I were to be interrogated concerning the doctrine of Mahomet's Alcoran or Zoroaster's Zend. Nor can I ever think myself more at liberty, by philosophizing after my manner, to adulterate with my reveries the doctrine of Jesus Christ, than I should think myself at liberty to treat thus the system either of the military prophet of the Musselmans, or of the Persian sage. It is the contrary practice, which hath so miserably sophisticated the Christian scheme, and rendered many of our theological controversies mere logomachies, or no other than doting about questions and strifes of words, in which, if the terms were properly defined and understood, the difference would vanish.



There are not a few of them in like manner, and those too the most hotly agitated, of which it may be said with the greatest justice, that scripture is of neither side, having never so much as entered into the question. The third thing I would have him attend to, is to keep as near as possible to scripture style, only preferring proper to figurative expressions, and using those words which are the plainest, and of the most definite signification. Above all, he ought to avoid the use of technical terms and phrases, which, it may be alleged, gives a learned dress to religion; but it is a dress that very ill befits an institution intended for the comfort and direction of all even of the lowest ranks. It is besides but too manifest, that this garb is often no other, than a cloak for ignorance. And of all kinds of ignorance, learned ignorance is undoubtedly the most contemptible.

I shall consider next the manner in which the student may attempt a compend of the Christian ethics; and consider the advantages that will result to him, in being pretty much employed in such exercises.

NOTE REFERRED TO IN PAGE 50.

As a specimen of the manner of study above recommended, and as an instance of its advantages, it may not be improper to subjoin a criticism of Dr. Campbell's, on a passage in the epistle to the Hebrews. The investigation is exhibited so clearly and fully, that it will show by the teacher's own example and success, the benefit which the student may reasonably expect from an observance of his rules. *Juvat usque morari et conferre gradum.* The passage is Heb. iii. 5. *Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant.* When I consider the scope of the apostle in this chapter, I perceive clearly an intention to compare the two great legislators whom God had sent into the world, first, Moses, then Jesus Christ, not in respect of the personal virtues which they exhibited, but in respect of the dignity of station or rank to which they were raised. In respect of virtue, there is no contrast at all in the passage; as indeed in what regards a trust, nothing greater can be said of any one than is said of Moses, that he was faithful. And so far is that which follows, to wit, that Moses was only a servant, Jesus Christ the Son and heir, from giving the superiority in point of merit to the latter; that, as is universally allowed, the less a man has of personal interest, in the subject intrusted him, the greater is the virtue of his fidelity. But the whole scope of the apostle sufficiently shows, that in nothing are the two great lawgivers above mentioned meant to be compared, but in title, office, and rank. As no doubt can be made of the

entire faithfulness of both, it appears like a deviation from the scope of the argument, to mention this virtue at all. But can any thing be clearer or more unexceptionable than the common version, *Moses was faithful*, Μωσης μὲν πιστός? Notwithstanding its clearness, notwithstanding its commonness, I may almost say, its universality, I cannot help entertaining some doubts concerning it. The apostle has, in treating this topic, a manifest allusion to a passage in the Pentateuch, in which, on occasion of the sedition of Aaron and Miriam, God says, Numb. xii. 6, &c. *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.* This passage plainly gives room for the same suspicion. The scope of the place is manifestly to show the superior privileges of Moses, through the favour of God, to those of any other prophet, and not his superior virtues. The words that follow make this, if possible, still more glaring, v. 8. *With him will I speak, mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches: and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?* Nothing can be plainer, than that the intention is here to show not the virtue, but the prerogative of Moses, above all other prophets under that dispensation, as it is the intention of the writer to the Hebrews to show the prerogative of Jesus Christ above Moses. And for this reason, I suspect that the word is not rightly rendered, *faithful*, in the passage quoted from Numbers.

That I may discover, if possible, whether my suspicion is well founded, I shall first recur to the place in the version of the Seventy, where the expression, about which the doubt arises, is the same as in the epistle to the Hebrews: ὁ θεράπων μὲν Μωυσης ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μὲν πιστός ἐστιν. Yet, there is here no comparative view of virtues, but only of honours and privileges; nothing is said tending to derogate from the faithfulness of any other prophet. Nor does ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μὲν make the smallest addition in this respect; for, as our Lord hath said, "He who is faithful in little will be faithful also in much; and he who is unfaithful in little, will be unfaithful also in much." Yet, if in our interpretations, we are to be determined solely by the classical use, it is hardly possible to conceive how πιστός can be rendered otherwise into English than by the term *faithful*.

I therefore find it necessary, in the last place, to recur to the Hebrew. There I find the word rendered תִּשּׁוּס, is *neeman*, which has not only the signification of *faithful*, but being the passive participle of the verb, *aman*, to believe, signifies also, *trusted*, *charged with*, and thence also, *firm*, *stable*, &c. Now as the sense of Greek words in Hellenistic use is often affected by the Hebrew, the word, תִּשּׁוּס, has this meaning in several passages of the Septuagint. See for an example of this 1 Sam. iii. 20, where the words, *ὅτι πιστός Σαμουηλ ἐς προφητην τῷ κυρίῳ*, are rendered in the English translation, *that Samuel was established, to be a prophet of the Lord.* The translators have made a reference to the margin on the word *established*, adding there, or, *faithful*. The same term both in Hebrew and Greek is rendered Psalm lxxxix. 28, by the English word *fast*. *My covenant shall*

stand fast with him. The expression in Numbers, to which the Apostle to the Hebrews refers, is thus rightly rendered by Castalio. *At cum Mose meo, non item, cui totius meæ domus fides habetur.* And by Houbigant, *Non ita servus meus Moyses. Ille universæ domus meæ minister est perpetuus.* In his notes he adds, *neeman, stabilis, non autem, fidelis.* "Enimvero hic describitur Moyses ex perpetuitate prophetiæ, non ex morum fidelitate. Ita rem intelligebat Paulus Apost. ubi postquam testimonio hujus loci usus est, addit continenter, *amplioris enim gloriæ iste præ Moyse dignus habitus est*; gloriam gloriæ comparans; Christi Domini cum Moysis. Et claudicaret similitudo, si gloriam Christi cum Mosis fidelitate compararet."

In order to give a more distinct view of the light, which the above mentioned alteration throws upon the passage, I shall offer an exact version of the whole paragraph, being the first six verses of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. To take such a view of the whole in connection, is often necessary, as much for the better explaining of the import of a criticism, as for evincing its solidity. *"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our religion, Jesus Christ, who, as well as Moses, was by him who raised him to that dignity, intrusted with all his house. But who hath attained honour as far superior to that of Moses, as the glory of the builder is greater than that of the house. For every house hath been built by some person; but he who built all things is God. And Moses was indeed trusted as a servant, for publishing to all God's family whatever he had in charge: but Christ is trusted as a son over his own family; whose family we are, provided we maintain our profession and boasted hope, unshaken to the end."* Nothing can be more evident than that it is the sole intention of this writer to compare the dignities of station, not the virtues, of Moses and Christ, the two founders of the only divine dispensations of religion, the Jewish and the Christian. He admits that Moses as well as Christ, may be justly said to have been intrusted, not with a part only, but with all God's house; and that, in this respect Moses had a very great pre-eminence above all the other prophets of that dispensation; but in regard to Christ, though it might be said his charge was the same in point of extent—the whole house of God—the trust committed to him was in its nature greatly superior. Moses was trusted with the whole, but it was only *ὡς δούλων*, like a steward, who is no more than an upper servant in the family, but Jesus Christ as a son, who is the heir of all.

It may not be amiss here to take notice of the circumstances which first suggested to me the criticism now made, or rather, as I may justly say, which first occasioned my lighting upon the sense of this passage. By carefully retracing the steps in consequence whereof we have arrived at any discovery, we take the most probable means of suggesting to others a method by which future discoveries may be made. The faithfulness of Moses, as mentioned both here and in the Pentateuch, had often appeared to me foreign from the scope of the context, which related in both places solely to the excellency of the office, not to the worthiness of the officer. At the same time I

did not see how *πιστος* could be translated otherwise than *faithful*. I found it so rendered in all the versions of the New Testament I had consulted, Castalio's not excepted. But then I had recourse to Castalio's version of the Old Testament, for the interpretation of the passage alluded to, I found the rendering totally different, and such as perfectly suited the scope of the argument. It implied solely, that to Moses had been committed the charge of all God's house; a charge so weighty, as had never been committed to any prophet before him, nor indeed to any prophet after him under that dispensation. This led me to look into the Septuagint, where I found the term *πιστος* employed, as it was afterwards by the apostle, who (as usual) copied the words of that version. My next recourse was to the Hebrew, where I found the origin of the error lay in the ambiguity of a Hebrew participle, which even analogically should signify *cui fides habetur*, rather than *qui fidelis est*. Castalio, though sensible of this in translating the Hebrew word *neeman*, did not think he could render in the same manner the Greek *πιστος*. Yet it is one of the chief peculiarities of the idiom of the synagogue, that the Greek words have in it an extent of signification corresponding to that of the Hebrew words which they are employed to represent. I was not at that time acquainted with the translation of the Old Testament by Houbigant, who has signified in a note on the passage in the Pentateuch, that the words of the apostle ought to be understood and interpreted in the same manner. This, together with many other examples which might be brought, serves to confirm an observation I have made in another place, that to understand perfectly the language of the New Testament, the knowledge of Hebrew is almost as necessary as that of Greek.

LECTURE IV.

Directions for forming a System of Christian Morality. Advantages of the Method recommended.

IN my last lecture, I made it my business to point out a proper method for conducting the study of holy writ, in such a manner, as that from it the student may form to himself, uninfluenced by the opinions of fallible men, a digest of the truth, as it is in Jesus. I purpose in the present discourse, to shew how he may proceed to form a system of Christian morality. This, though properly first in intention, (for we seek knowledge to direct our practice) is last in execution; it being that, to which every other part in this economy points, as to its ultimate end. The great and primary aim of the whole is to renew us again after the image of him that created

us, in righteousness and true holiness ; faith itself, and hope, however important, act in a subserviency to this. It may indeed be thought, that as there are much fewer disputes concerning the duties required by our religion, than concerning the doctrines which it teaches, the examination of the former, as the easier task, ought to precede the examination of the latter. And indeed this remark would have so far weighed with me, that if I had judged it expedient to begin our inquiries into the Christian theology by the study of systematic and controversial writers, I should have adopted this method, on account of its greater simplicity and easiness. But if, waving for a time all attentions to the comments, glosses, traditions, questions, and refinements of men, recourse is had only to the divine oracles, there is not the same necessity ; the difference in point of difficulty, if any, will be found inconsiderable ; on the other hand, the progression from knowledge to faith, from faith to love, from love to obedience, is more conformable to the natural influence of things upon the human mind. Besides, the subject of Christian morals is not without its difficulties nor its controversies, though they have been neither so great nor so many, as those which have been raised in relation to several points supposed to belong to the Christian doctrine. But even this subject is not in all respects uncontroverted ; witness the many differences in point of practice that not only subsist, but are warmly contested by the different sects in Christendom, one party thinking he doth God good service, by an action which another looks on with abhorrence, and justly stigmatizes as at once impious and inhuman. With how many still, are matters of full as little account, as tithing mint, anise and cummin, exalted above the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and fidelity ? It is sacrificed with some, which with others is accounted sacrilege ; and in too many places of what is called the Christian world, those absurd austerities and self-inflicted cruelties, which degrade human nature, dishonor religion, and could only become the worshippers of dæmons, such as Baal or Moloch, are extolled as the sublimity of Christian perfection. I mention these things only by the way, in order to show that the unanimity among Christians, in regard to moral duties, is not so complete, as is commonly imagined. Not that I would have the student at first to enter into these questions in relation to morality any more than into such as are of a speculative nature and relate to doctrine. Let it be his first aim in both provinces, to inquire impartially into the mind of the spirit, as it appears in revelation itself,

without admitting any interruption from the visions and speculations of men. Something of a plan or outline has been suggested, to assist him in his inquiries into the doctrine of scripture; it will not be improper to proceed in the same way in what regards the system of duty which may be collected from the same volume. Only it will be proper to premise, that though the law of the gospel be not as was the law of Moses, what the apostle styles a law of commandments or a law of ordinances, yet there are some things (as is absolutely necessary in every religious institution calculated for a creature such as man) *of a ceremonial*, and some of a *mixed nature* partly ceremonial and partly moral, as well as some things *purely moral*. Of the first kind are what we now call the Christian sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper; of the second, what regards social and public worship and the separation of particular times for the purpose; and of the third, all the duties directly comprehended under *charity* or the love of God and man. As to the doctrine of the New Testament in regard to the two first, I meant to comprehend them under the sixth head of the sketch I gave in relation to the Christian doctrine, which I termed the regeneration or the recovery of man. Under this was comprised the consideration of the external means, their use, their difference under different dispensations, and their connection with the effect to be produced. The subject to which I here confine myself is Christian morality, or the pure ethics of the gospel. Every thing that is of a positive nature falls much more properly under the former part. In regard to this, it is evident, that different methods may be adopted for classing the different branches of duty, and there may be a conveniency in viewing the same subject in a variety of lights.

The only method which I shall take notice of at present, and which is both the simplest and the most obvious, is that which results from the consideration of the object, *God, our neighbour, and ourselves*. This division the apostle Paul has given of our duty in a passage well deserving the Christian's most serious attention, as intimating the great and ultimate end of the gospel dispensation: "The grace of God," says he, "that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and puri-

fy unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The whole of Christian morality is here divided into three great branches, *sobriety*, or the duty which every man owes to himself, and which consists in what we may call *self government* in the largest acceptation of the word, implying two great articles, a due command, first of appetite, secondly of passion; which we may distinguish by the titles of temperance and moderation, the former as it stands opposed to these vices, intemperance, incontinence, and sloth, which are different branches of voluptuousness; the latter as it stands opposed to pride, anger, avarice, and the love of life, being distinguished by these several names, humility, meekness, contentment and fortitude.

Again, the second general branch into which the Christian morality is divided, is *righteousness*, or that duty which every man owes to all mankind. This may be subdivided from a regard to what is implied in the nature of the subject, into these two virtues, justice and beneficence. The former, that is justice, however highly valued and rarely found, is but at best a kind of negative virtue, and consists in doing no ill to others, in not injuring them in their persons, property, virtue or reputation, which is but the lowest effect of that love, which every man owes to another. "For this," says the apostle, "thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." It proves and effectual check to injury in thought, word and action. But I call it the lowest attainment of that divine principle, not to injure those, to whom it obligeth us to do all the good we can. This constitutes the nature of that beneficence, which was mentioned as the second branch of that duty, which we owe to other men. Justice or equity is sufficient to prevent our doing that to another, which on a change of circumstances we could not approve, or think just and equitable if done to ourselves; but beneficence goes further and applies the golden precept of our Lord in its full extent, "Whatever ye would, that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them." This leads to all the different exertions of love, which the different situations of the object, or the different relations which the object bears to us, require at our hands, and which are distinguished by the names of generosity, benevolence, patriotism, hospitality, friend-

ship, natural affection, brotherly love, humanity, gratitude, clemency, mercy and forgiveness.

The third branch in the general division is *godliness* or *piety*; which has the great Author of our being for its immediate object. The duties which we owe to him, and which constitute that spiritual worship which the devout soul habitually at all times and in all places pays him, are reverence, love, trust and resignation. The object of the first, which is reverence, is the supereminent excellency of all the divine attributes, considered in themselves: that of the second, which is love, is his goodness and mercy, particularly as they appear in his works of creation and redemption; the object of the third, which is trust, is in a special manner the veracity and faithfulness of God, considered in conjunction with his wisdom and power; and the object of the fourth and last, which is resignation, is providence, that is to say, all the divine perfections considered as employed in the government of the world, and in overruling all events in such a manner, as that they shall fulfil the ends of infinite wisdom and goodness, and complete at last the happiness of God's people. This view of the Christian plan of morals is the more agreeable, that it exhibits to us our duty in a kind of scale or climax, not unlike the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream, whose foot was fixed upon the earth, and whose top reached the heaven. It begins at self, at the regulation of the inferior appetites and passions, the great hinderances to spiritual illumination, and to all moral improvement, and at the acquisition of those virtues which are in effect little other in themselves than the negation of vices; and from these, it rises and expands itself so as to embrace the human race, thence again it ascends even to the throne of the most high God.

The end of the Christian religion is often represented as being the assimilation of the soul to God, by which alone we can be qualified for the enjoyment of him. Now as virtue in man, so the moral perfections of God have been represented as centering in the single character of love. "Love is of God," says the apostle John, "and God is love." Agreeably to this doctrine, the acquisition of this quality is represented as the end of the whole Christian dispensation, which our apostle styles "the commandment," by way of eminence. "Now the end of the commandment is charity," (or love, for the word in the original is the same) "out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." To the same

purpose we are told that it is "the bond of perfectness," or that which must consummate the Christian character. You need not be told, that in the love of God and the love of our neighbour, our duty to both is in the New Testament commonly comprehended, and these two constitute the second and third classes of duty in the gospel system above enumerated.

With regard to the virtues of the first class, which have self for the object, and which consist in temperance with regard to bodily appetite, and moderation in what concerns the passions of the soul, these cannot be considered as bearing in themselves a direct resemblance to any thing in the divine mind. They result purely from the peculiarities of our nature and circumstances; at the same time, they are absolutely prerequisite to the acquisition of that resemblance. They prepare the heart for its reception, by the exclusion of whatever might tend to obstruct its access. Nor can any thing more effectually block up the avenues of the heart to prevent the entrance of the celestial guest, Christian love, than sensuality and inordinate affection. Thus I have given you a kind of skeleton of the ethics of the gospel, not to preclude your own assiduous endeavours on this most important topic, but to serve on the contrary as hints to promote them. In forming a digest upon such a plan, it would be proper to observe carefully the same things, which were pointed out as meriting your attention on the former head. They were principally three: To make scripture serve as its own interpreter; not to indulge a spirit of philosophizing, or disposition to refine upon the several articles; and lastly, to adopt as nearly as possible the scripture language, only preferring the plainest and simplest expressions to those which are figurative, or may be thought in any respect ambiguous or obscure.

It will not be improper in such a system to attend a little to what may be called the order of subordination in duties, and to point out in cases wherein there may be an interfering, which ought to give place to the other. I do not mean, that he should enter into all the curious discussions of casuistry, an art, which when all things are duly considered, will be found, I fear, to have done more disservice to religion and morals than benefit. In matters of right and wrong, it has been observed with reason, that our first thoughts are commonly the best. God hath not left the discovery of practical truths, or what regards our duty, in the same way, as those truths that are of a theoretic nature, to the slow and precarious deductions of the rational faculty; but has in our consciences given

such clear intimations of what is right and amiable in conduct, that where there have been no prejudices to occupy the mind, and pervert the natural sense of things, it commands an immediate and instinctive approbation. Recourse is rarely had to the casuist for the sake of discovering what is our duty, but very often that we may find a plausible pretext for eluding its commands. The Christian scheme in this particular will be found, it is hoped, exactly conformable to the purest dictates of the unprejudiced mind, to be truly perfective of our nature, which it evidently tends to purify, expand, and raise, from every thing that is sordid, contracted, or low. The casuistic art, as it is commonly managed, is in fact but a child of the metaphysical theology of the schools, and has taken a considerable tincture from the secular considerations which have influenced the parent. Hence the term casuistical reasoning has, with judicious people, fallen very much into disgrace, and is considered at present as very nearly synonymous with sophistical and jesuitical reasoning. I do not say indeed, that there may not sometimes happen complicated cases, in which even a sensible and good man might be perplexed on which side he ought to determine. But these do not frequently occur; and to employ oneself in imagining them before hand, and in devising the various possible circumstances in which transgression may be either extenuated or excused, will, I am afraid, be found a more effectual expedient for insinuating vice, than it is for making us understand the just limits of virtue.

I come now to point out the advantages, which will redound to the student from his employing so much of his time and labour on the scriptures, as the exercises, which I have enjoined, will necessarily require. The first and most manifest advantage is a knowledge of the scriptures. If any thing whatever can contribute to this end, the method I have proposed must certainly do it. Every thing that is remarkable in the sacred volume may almost be comprised in these three particulars, the history it contains, the scheme of doctrine, and the system of precepts. In order to make a proper abstract of each, it is necessary that we should be attentive to, and get acquainted with every part. Some parts indeed are more essential for one of these purposes, and other parts for another; but there is no portion of sacred writ, of which we may not say with justice, that it is conducive for our improvement, either in the biblical history, doctrine, or morals, if not in more than one of them, or even in all the three.

Another advantage well deserving the student's serious attention

is this. It puts him upon a method, by means of which he can hardly be in a situation wherein he may not have it in his power to employ his time profitably in the acquisition of useful knowledge, and in forming habits of composition. I can easily conceive, and I believe many of you, gentlemen, may have experienced what I am going to mention, I say, I can easily conceive that the situation, in which you may sometimes find yourselves, may be such as affords very little advantage for study, on any plan of reading that could well be proposed. The books which I might recommend may not be found in the places to which your circumstances may lead you, and even the most ordinary helps may not be at hand. On the plan I propose, a great deal may be done with no other book but the Bible, and a concordance, which are to be found every where. Such of you as can read Hebrew, and it is what you all ought to read, should never be without a Hebrew Bible of your own, and let me add to this, a copy of the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament. And if you have these, which are neither cumbersome or expensive, you are so richly provided, that it is your own fault, wherever you are, if you are not improving daily. The other books, which I have recommended for your advancement in the knowledge of sacred history, and for familiarizing you to the Jewish manners, ceremonies, polity, idiom, you ought to use when you have the opportunity of such assistances, but ought always to remember that the want of them needs never impede your progress, and consequently is no excuse for your being idle. It is a point of the utmost consequence to young men, that we lay down to them a proper method of employing their time, not in a certain imaginary situation which one might devise or wish, but in those actual situations, in which the greater part of you have a probability of being. I have known directions given to students, which seemed to proceed on the hypothesis, that they were to live all their days in the midst of a library, where no literary production of any name was wanting. The consequence of this was, that the impracticability of the execution made all the sage directions they received, to be almost as soon forgotten as given; and even if they were not forgotten, as they could not be put in practice, for want of the necessary implements recommended, they would serve only as an excuse for idleness. I would, as much as possible, supply this defect; and allow me to add, I would deprive every one of you, if I can, of that silly pretext for doing nothing, that you have not books. I insist upon it, that the young student, while he has the Bible, may still be usefully employed.

A third advantage which will redound from a proper application of the method now proposed, is, that your style on religious subjects will be very much formed on that of the scriptures. And what can be so proper for conveying the mind of God in the great truths of revelation, as that which was employed by the Spirit of God, who speaks to us by the sacred penmen? One of the many unhappy consequences, which have resulted from the divisions of Christians, from their classing themselves under their several captains and leaders, in manifest derogation from the honor due to their only head and lord, the Messiah, and in no less manifest contempt of the apostolical warnings they have received to the contrary, (one, I say, of the unhappy consequences of this conduct) is, that each party hath got a dialect of its own, formed upon the model of the great doctor or rabbi the founder, or, at least, the champion of the sect to whom they have implicitly resigned their understandings. And what is worse, this diversity in the dialects used by the different parties hath itself become the ground of an alienation of heart from one another; and that, even in cases where this difference in phraseology, is all the difference which a wise man would be able to discern between them. It was the resolution of Paul to speak the things of God, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The reverse is the practice of all, in whom the true spirit of the sect predominates, of whatever denomination the sect be. They are ever for speaking the things of God, not in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, but which man's wisdom teacheth. In antediluvian times when the sons of God went in to the daughters of men, the product of this unnatural mixture, as the sacred historian informs us, was giants, men of renown indeed, but renowned only for what is bad, men hideous both in body and mind, as eminent for their wickedness as for their stature. When religion, the daughter of heaven, hath been at any time unhappily forced to admit an intercourse with school metaphysics, a mere son of earth, the fruit of such incongruous union has been a brood no less monstrous. Or to adopt an apt similitude of Luther's, "*Mixtione quadam ex divinis eloquiis et philosophicis rationibus, tanquam ex Centaurorum genere biformis disciplina conflata est.*"* Hence those absurdities in doctrine, dressed in technical and barbarous language, by which the truth as it is in Jesus, hath been so miserably defaced. Nor have these

* From a mixture of the divine oracles and of philosophical reasonings there has sprung a double shaped form of doctrine, reminding one of the Centaurs.

last monsters been guilty of fewer or less considerable ravages, than the first. In proof of this fact, many of the most incontestible evidences from church history might be produced. What the apostle dreaded with regard to the Corinthians, has in less or more befallen Christians of all denominations, their minds have been corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. A more curious, a more artificial, and a more learned style, was necessary to gratify a vitiated palate and depraved appetite.

Many are the evils which to this day are consequent upon an immoderate attachment to scholastic language. One is, a certain jealousy of temper which it has occasioned. As one principal distinction, especially in those parties or factions which are considered as approaching nearest to one another, is in their style and idiom, a true sectary gives a particular attention not to the sentiments, but to the phraseology of any writer or speaker whose performance falls under his consideration, in order that he may discover whether he be a genuine son of the party. For this purpose, he is apt to scrutinize every word and expression, though in itself the most harmless and inoffensive, with a kind of malicious severity, and, in consequence of this habit, acquires a suspicious censoriousness in his manner of judging, which in every doubtful case leans to the unfavourable side; a disposition the most opposite, both to the docile and to the charitable temper of christianity, that can be well conceived. Do not mistake me, as though I meant this charge against any one sect or party, or those of one particular persuasion. I am persuaded, on the contrary, that it may with too great justice be charged on all. Nay, what is worse, though they are shy to speak it, the style of scripture itself doth not altogether escape their animadversion and dislike. In the various disputes that have been introduced, as those on each side pretend, that the doctrine of holy writ is conformable to that of their party, each has recourse to it for arguments. Each picks out those expressions and passages which appear most favourable to its own dogmas, carefully avoiding those, which seem to lean to the side of the adversary, and are most commonly quoted by him. The consequence of this is, that the various texts of scripture are strangely disunited among themselves, ranged on different sides, and, as it were, mustered among the forces of the opposite combatants. One set of scriptural expressions and terms become the favourites of one party, and are, to say the least of it, carefully avoided by another; this latter has also in holy writ its darling terms and phrases, which are no less shunned and

disliked by the former. Thus all have more or less incurred the reproach which the prophet Malachi threw out against the priests of his day, "that they had corrupted the covenant, and were partial in the law." Part, it would seem, pleased them, and part did not; they were careful to cull out those particulars which were suited to their taste, and not less careful to omit such as were unpalatable. And are not we chargeable with the like partiality in regard to God's word? Doth not one side look with a jealous eye on the very mention of good works, especially as that according to which we must finally be judged, according to which we must be either rewarded or punished? Doth not the necessity of obedience, though delivered in the very words of scripture, the insufficiency of faith when unfruitful and alone, the danger of apostacy, of making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, and the duty of perseverance, alarm them with the direful apprehensions of arminianism, pelagianism, popery, the doctrine of merit, and what not? But do I accuse those of one side only? By no means? Under this sin all sects and parties may with the greatest justice be concluded. Do but consider the matter impartially. How are those of a different party affected by the mention of our being saved by faith, of the necessity of divine grace, of election, regeneration, and the like? Are not their fears as quickly alarmed? Are they not apt to exclaim, "rank Calvinism," it is much, if they do not add, "fanatical and puritanical nonsense?" And is it not evident, that in this manner the censures and reproaches of both are levelled in a great measure against the word of God itself, whose language, it is manifest, that neither party will admit in all things to be safe and unexceptionable? It is worth while to observe the different ways of quoting adopted by different sides. Each always abounds most in the favourite texts of the party; but when the introduction of a passage, that has been often strenuously urged by an adversary, seems unavoidable, what pains do they not take to mend it? With what circumspect attention do they intersperse such clauses, and make such additions, as may prevent its being understood in any other sense, than the sect approves? Is it possible, in a more glaring manner, to show their disapprobation of the language of the Spirit; and that it is their opinion, that on some points even the Holy Ghost hath expressed himself incautiously, an oversight, which, it would seem, they think it incumbent on them, when occasion offers, to correct? I know no way to avoid all those evil consequences of the spirit of schism and rage of dogmatism, that have so long and so universal-

ly prevailed in the church, but by having recourse directly to the fountain, before our minds have been tainted by any party whatever. This, and nothing but this, will ever bring our judgments into the right train, and lead us to determine concerning the doubtful and jarring opinions and expressions of men by the infallible word of God, and not of the infallible word of God, by the doubtful and jarring opinions and expressions of men.

The last great advantage I propose to mention as resulting from this method, is the preparation it gives for the understanding, both of the general controversy concerning the truth of christianity, and in like manner of all the particular disputes that have arisen in the church. This I shall illustrate in the next lecture.

LECTURE V.

Subject continued—The knowledge of the Scriptures the most essential part of the Study—How far the Study of Controversy demands our attention.

IN my last discourse, I began with giving some hints to aid the young inquirer into religion, in forming a kind of system of Christian morality, and concluded with pointing out the advantages which would redound to him, from his being frequently employed in the exercises on the scripture which we have recommended, that is, in making abstracts, first of the scriptural history, secondly of the doctrines, and thirdly of the moral precepts. Of these advantages, I particularly mentioned and illustrated on the last occasion, three. The first was, that it is one of the most effectual methods, I can conceive, of bringing the student to an intimate acquaintance with his Bible. The second was, that it suggests to him an excellent method of employing his time usefully in almost any situation wherein he can be placed. Every other method or plan of study presupposeth so many things, so much leisure, so many conveniences, and so great a variety of books, that admitting it were ever so profitable, it can scarcely ever be put in execution; whereas, on the contrary, if the young divine, however situated, be not in a condition for executing this, we may say justly, that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, he has himself to blame. The third advantage I mentioned was, that his style in religious matters, in what regards the great truths of revelation, would by this method

be formed entirely on the style of holy writ, the great and only source of our information on this head, a style which in general terms is admitted by all parties of Christians to be unexceptionable, a style which no sect dares directly to accuse, and yet with which no true sectary is altogether satisfied. Nor will this advantage appear inconsiderable to those, who see what it is to be confined and hampered in the trammels of a faction, and who are duly sensible of the jealousy and malignity of spirit, that have been consequent on the many discordant Babel dialects, which have been introduced into the Christian world by our numerous and antichristian divisions.

The fourth and last great advantage, which in concluding I just mentioned, and now intend to illustrate, is, the preparation which by this method the student will acquire, for the understanding both of the general controversy concerning the truth of Christianity, and also of the particular disputes that have arisen in the church. As to the general controversy concerning the truth of revelation, the objections of the adversaries, as was observed formerly, are mostly of two kinds. They are either intrinsic, and are levelled against the contents of scripture, the doctrine it teaches, the morals it inculcates, or the probability of the history it records; or extrinsic, and are levelled against the outward evidences which are produced in its defence, the miracles performed, and the prophecies fulfilled. Now as to the former species of attack, it is manifest we are utterly unfit for judging of the question concerning the quality of the contents of revelation, till we have previously studied what the contents are. If we go to work the other way, which I call preposterous, we are entirely at the mercy of the antagonist for the most essential part, the very foundation of his argument, to wit, the reality of the facts and allegations, on which all his reasonings are built. If we take things for granted on his bare affirmation, which if he has a specious manner of writing we shall have a strong propensity to do, it is a thousand to one we shall become the dupes of the grossest misrepresentation. If we have the sense and caution to perceive that we ought to suspend our judgment, till we have impartially examined the allegations in point of fact, we shall at best be perplexed and puzzled, but can never be edified or improved by so premature a study. The only thing we then can do with propriety, is to betake ourselves to the study of scripture in some such method as that which has been proposed; and before we have accomplished

this, 'tis a thousand to one, that all our previous controversial reading, when we were nowise prepared to enter into the argument, will be quite forgotten, so that the least bad consequence of this perversion of the natural order is the loss of so much time and labour, and the necessity we are under of beginning the controversy a second time, if we would become masters of the question. Even in a dispute, which we may happen to hear in company, how little are we qualified to judge which of the parties hath reason on his side, if we are unacquainted with the subject of dispute? We shall possibly be capable of deciding, which is the ablest disputant; but we could not devise a more fallacious rule, though in such circumstances none is more common, by which to determine the merits of the cause.

Let it not be pleaded in answer to this, that without such a course of study and exercises as hath been proposed, the generality of students, at least in protestant countries, have sufficient knowledge of the contents of scripture, to qualify them to judge of such controversy; for have they not had occasion, nay, have they not been inured to read the sacred books themselves, and to hear them read by others, even from their infancy? But to this I reply, that as teaching in this manner has always been accompanied more or less with human explications and glosses, the learner in so early a period is extremely ill qualified to distinguish the text from the comment. Accordingly, do we not see, that with the same practice of reading scripture and hearing it read, the notions of its doctrine, imbibed by the youth, are different in different countries and in different sects? It is of importance, before the student enter on the main question, the truth of his religion, that he should be enabled to distinguish between the commandments of God, and the traditions of the elders; between the simple truth, as it is in Jesus, and the subtleties and refinements of the theorist. These are miserably blended and confounded in all the attacks that have been made on the Christian religion. And what is worse, most of the answerers, having been themselves zealous partizans of some sect, have contributed to confirm and increase the confusion. The method I have proposed, doth, in my opinion, bid fairest for accomplishing the end, and enabling the student, in most cases, to make the distinction. Besides, even the attacks that have been made on the external evidences, especially in regard to the fulfilment of prophecies, when the argument turns on the meaning of the prediction, we are, by thus familiarizing ourselves to the study of the scripture

idiom, language, and sentiments, prepared for understanding, and consequently for deciding upon its strength or weakness. And indeed (if we except only the abstract and metaphysical argument, that has been urged against the possibility of miraculous events as being preternatural, which is totally independent on any question of fact, and may therefore be studied at any time) the best preparation we can make, for entering into the whole controversy concerning the truth of Christianity, is a critical knowledge of holy writ, together with some proficiency both in biblical and ecclesiastic history. But further, this will be found the best method, not only for enabling us to understand the controversy, but for abridging it also. We shall be in a capacity for detecting many fallacies in reasoning, and many misrepresentations of fact, which might otherwise stagger and confound us. When thus prepared, our own penetration will, in many cases, supersede the necessity of perusing refutations.

But this method will be found not only the best preparation for understanding the general controversy concerning the truth of our religion, but also for entering properly into the particular controversies that have arisen among Christians concerning articles of faith, matters of government, worship, discipline, or morals. When the adverse parties are both protestants, the point just now affirmed may with propriety be called self-evident; because the only infallible rule of decision admitted by both parties, is the scripture. And even in the disputes which subsist between protestants and papists, or Roman Catholics as they affect to call themselves, this knowledge of the sacred volume and history must be of the utmost consequence; since, though we do not receive for scripture all that they account canonical, yet they admit as such all the books that are received by us; and though they will not acknowledge scripture to be the only rule of faith and manners, yet as they own its inspiration, they avow it to be a rule and an unerring rule too. The exact knowledge of its contents must therefore be of the greatest moment to one who would enter the lists with a Romanist, since those of that faction cannot, consistently with their own profession, admit any thing in religion, which is contradictory to the doctrine or precepts contained in that book: so that even upon their own principles, their tenets are liable to be confuted from scripture, if we can evince the contrariety. And with regard to all the particular popish controversies, next to the knowledge of scripture, a thorough acquaintance with ecclesiastic history is of the greatest importance. Uninterrupted tradition is a much boasted and very powerful plea with

them. It is impossible without such an acquaintance with church history, for any one to conceive how miserably ill this plea is adapted to support their cause. The gradual introduction of their many gross corruptions, both in doctrine and practice, is so extremely apparent to the historic student, that even a person of moderate penetration will need no other proof, either of their novelty, or of the baseness of their extraction. He will thus in the most effectual manner be convinced of the falseness of all other foundations, tradition, popes, and councils, and that the Bible is that alone on which the religion of Christians can rest immoveably. He will be apt to conclude in the words of the excellent Chillingworth, (whose performance deserves a most serious perusal, not more because it is a clear detection of papistical sophistry, than because it is an admirable specimen of just and acute reasoning, he will be ready, I say, to conclude in the words of that author,) "Whatsoever else they believe besides the Bible, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of opinion, but as a matter of faith and religion neither can they, with coherence to their own grounds, believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption. I, for my part, after a long and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the *true way to eternal happiness*, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but on this rock only. I see plainly and with my own eyes, that there are popes against popes; councils against councils; some fathers against others; the same fathers against themselves; a consent of fathers of one age against a consent of fathers of another age; the church of one age against the church of another age. Traditive interpretations of scripture are pretended, but there are none to be found. No tradition, but only of scripture, can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that in such an age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of scripture only, for any considerate man to build upon." Thus far that able advocate of Protestantism. So just will the remark be found upon the trial, that those branches of knowledge, which we have advised the student to begin with, holy writ and sacred history, will, beyond his conception, tend to shorten the study of all religious controversies both general and particular. The reason is obvious. It will supply him with a fund in himself, whereby he can discover the solidity or futility of almost every argument that can be advanced.

On the contrary, when one who is quite unprovided in this respect, enters on controversy either general or particular, what is the consequence? It is, I may say, invariably, one or other of these two. He is either fixed entirely in his sentiments by the first author he reads, so that the clearest proofs from reason or scripture can never shake him afterwards; or he is always the dupe of the last writer he has happened to peruse. The first is commonly the case, when there is ever so little of a previous bias from education to the principles, and a favourable opinion of the character of the author. The second holds more commonly when the bias from education, if any, is inconsiderable, and the authors on both sides ingenious and artful. Nor does this wavering in the student betray, as is commonly imagined, a want of understanding. The want it betrays is of a very different nature. It is the want of such a stock of knowledge, as is necessary to qualify the mind for judging. Or to adopt an illustration from the body; it is not the badness of his eyes, but the want of light which is the cause of his mistaking. And the best eyes in the world will not distinguish colours in the dark. It must be owned further, that even this changeableness, when it arises from such a cause as we have mentioned, shows commonly a laudable candour of temper and openness to conviction. In both cases, however, the effect is a sufficient demonstration, that the study was premature. Mr. Pope, by his own acknowledgment, was an instance of the case last mentioned, as we learn from one of his letters to Dr. Atterbury. The prelate, it would appear, had been using his best endeavours with the poet to induce him to read some of the most celebrated authors on the popish controversy, in order to his conversion to the church of England. Mr. Pope, amongst other things, informed the bishop, that he had formerly, even when he was but fourteen years old, employed some time in reading the best writers on both sides the question, and that the consequence had always been, that he was protestant and papist alternately, according to the principles of the author, who had last engaged his attention. He adds very pertinently, "I am afraid most seekers are in the same case; and when they stop, they are not so properly converted, as outwitted." Mr. Pope cannot, I think, be justly accused even by his enemies of a defect of understanding. In this particular, he was considerably above the ordinary standard. But being, in all probability, at that early period totally deficient in those materials, which could enable him to judge for himself in controversies about the sense of revelation, it was inevitable, that

he should be swayed by turns by the different representations of the different champions. In other words, not having in himself those lights that were necessary, the knowledge of scripture and the knowledge of history, to enable him to see with his own eyes, he was forced to see with those of other people; and his impartiality itself led him to be influenced most by the nearest, by him who had made the last impression. So much for the advantages which will accrue to the student from a proper prosecution of the plan I have been recommending.

But, it may be said, suppose this knowledge of which you speak, is once attained, Must he proceed any further? and if he must, In what manner? In answer to these questions, I observe first, that when once the knowledge I mentioned is attained, he has accomplished by far the most essential part of the study of Christian theology, he hath acquired that which is both in itself most valuable, and can best prepare him to enter with understanding into the other, and less essential parts of the study. Things however are rendered necessary to people in certain stations from certain accidental circumstances, which would otherwise be of little consequence in themselves. Of this sort are many things which the theologian must not altogether overlook. Some books deserve to be read on account of the useful instruction they contain; some again on account of the vogue they have obtained, and often merely that we may be qualified to say with greater confidence, that they contain nothing of any value; some, because they inform us of what is done; others, because they inform us of what is thought. And as the qualities of different books and the acquisitions we make by them are very different, so the motives that influence us are no less various: sometimes we read to obtain a supply of knowledge, oftener to obtain a supply of conversation, and not seldom to pass tolerably over a vacant hour, which we are at a loss how to spend. In determining the comparative merits of books, there can be no question, that those which convey useful knowledge and deserve a reading on their own account, are in a class greatly superior to those which afford only matter of conversation, and require a share of our attention on account of the esteem of others; and which is perhaps nearly coincident, those which instruct us in permanent truths, and the actual productions of eventful time, are of a higher order, than those which entertain us only with the vague opinions and unintelligible sophisms of men. Books of the third class, or pieces of mere amusement, I throw out of the question altogether. Now as to those

of the second, if every man were unconnected with and independent on his fellows, such reading (farther at least than were necessary to give us some notion of the wanderings of the human mind) it would perhaps be better to dispense with entirely. — But as that is not the case, and as our own happiness in a great measure, and the very end of our being depend on our utility, it is necessary, that in our studies this should command a considerable share of our regard. It is not by undervaluing their sentiments, that we can ever hope to be profitable to others, and to correct what is amiss in them. It is necessary that in this respect we should even follow the wanderer into his devious tracks, that we may be in a condition to lay hold of him, and reclaim him by reconducting him into the right way.

Now to make application of these observations to the present subject, I readily admit, that when once the young divine hath acquired the knowledge of the scriptures above recommended and illustrated, and hath added to this the history of our religion, he hath obtained all, or nearly all that is instructive, that is truly valuable on its own account, but he hath not obtained all that may be necessary to fit him for instructing others. For this purpose, he must be prepared to enter the lists with gainsayers on their own ground, and to fight them at their own weapons. With the fund of substantial knowledge above pointed out, he will hardly run the risk of being seduced by the sophistry of others, but he may be both surprised and silenced by it. We may perceive perfectly the inconclusiveness of the argument of an adversary, the moment it is produced, to which however we may not be able on the sudden to give a pertinent and satisfactory reply. Besides, a deficiency in this secondary kind of knowledge is perhaps more apt, in the judgment of the world, to fix on a character the stain of ignorance, than a defect in the primary kind. And how much this stigma, however unjustly fixed, will, by prejudicing the minds of men, prevent the success of a teacher, those who understand any thing of human nature will easily judge.

I will just now put a case, the decision of which will be thought by several to be problematical, and by many to be extremely clear, though of these no doubt some would decide one way, and some another. With the reservation of sacred writ and sacred history, under which I include all that can serve to enlighten pagan, Jewish and Christian antiquity, I will suppose that all our theological books, systems, controversies, commentaries, on all the different sides, were to be annihilated at once; the question is, whether the Christian world and the republic of letters would be a gainer or a loser by

this extraordinary event. Let it not be imagined, that I mean by this supposition, to consider all such performances as being on a level in point of excellency. Nothing can be farther from my view. I know that the difference among them in respect of merit is exceedingly great. Nor is it my intention to insinuate, that there would not be a real loss, when considered separately, in the suppression of many ingenious and many useful observations. But as there would on the other hand be manifest gain in the extinction of so much sophistry, the destruction of so many artful snares laid for seducing, the annihilation of the materials of so much contention, I may say, of the fuel for kindling such terrible conflagrations, my question regards only the balance upon the whole, and whether the loss would not be more than compensated by the profit. Can the Christian, at least can the Protestant, think, that there would be a want of any thing essential, whilst the word of God remained, and every thing that might be helpful, not to bias men to particular opinions, but to throw light upon its idiom and language? Is it possible, that any man of common understanding should imagine, we could ever come to differ so widely about the sense and meaning of scripture, if we did not take such different ways of setting out, and if almost every one were not at pains to get his mind pre-occupied by some human composition or teaching, before he enters on the examination of that rule? And would it be a mighty loss to Christians, that the seeds (I say not of their differences in opinion, but) of such unrelenting prejudices, such implacable animosities against one another, were totally destroyed? Shall it be regarded as a formidable danger, that all, by being thus compelled to a sort of uniformity in their method of study, should arrive at an unanimity, not so much in their tenets as in their dispositions and affections? For that this would be the consequence, there is the greatest reason in the world to believe; as in nine hundred and ninety-nine instances out of a thousand, all the differences among Christians are the manifest fruit of the different biasses previously given to their minds.

Those who are profoundly read in theological controversy, before they enter on the critical examination of the divine oracles, if they have the discernment to discover the right path, which their former studies have done much to prevent, and if they have the fortitude to persevere in keeping that path, will quickly be sensible, that they have more to unlearn than to learn; and that the acquisition of truth is not near so difficult a task, as to attain a superiority over rooted errors and old prejudices. Let it not be imagined from this,

that I condemn all controversial writing. There are certain circumstances, I am sensible, which render it necessary. Were it indeed possible, that all controversies in divinity were buried in one grave without the hope of resurrection, I should think it incomparably better for christendom; but it would be extremely hard if error were allowed to attack, and truth not permitted to defend herself. If there must be debates, let them be fair and open, let both sides be heard with candour and impartiality. This is the only sure way of giving all possible advantage to the truth. It were certainly better for mankind that no deadly weapons whatever were used or known among men; but if villians will use them for the purposes of mischief, it would be very hard, that honest men should be denied the use of them in self defence.

I would not by this be thought to insinuate, that these two cases are in all respects parallel, or that the patrons of error were always actuated by villanous designs. God forbid that I were so uncharitable. Our Lord himself hath assured us that those who would raise the most cruel persecutions against his disciples, would seriously think, that in so doing they did God service. He hath little knowledge of mankind who doth not perceive that men are often just as sincere in their intentions in the defence of erroneous, as of true, opinions. The only purpose of my similitude was to signify, that if honesty must be allowed to wage at least a defensive war against villany, the same privilege should be allowed to truth against falsehood. Here indeed it may be justly said, that the greater freedom ought to be permitted to both parties, as the distinction is not so easily made in the latter case, as in the former. To distinguish the just from the unjust in a quarrel is commonly a matter of much greater facility, than to distinguish the true from the false in a debate. But as it may be justly said, that errors in religion have generally more or less, directly or indirectly, a bad influence on practice, they ought always to be guarded against with all the precaution of which we are capable. Nor is there another way of guarding against them, that I know of, but by an unprejudiced and impartial scrutiny into all matters really questionable.

I have observed already, that after such an examination as hath been recommended of the sacred oracles, and of the histories to which they relate, and with which they are connected, both Jewish and Christian, the attentive and judicious student will not probably find much occasion, for his own sake, to canvass the works of con-

trovertists. It may, however, be of considerable consequence for the sake of others, that one who is to be vested with a public character in the church, should not be entirely unacquainted with their writings. The first controversy that claims our attention is the deistical, as this strikes directly at the foundation of all. Could one have an opportunity of studying this at his leisure, in what order he pleased, and had all the necessary books at his command, I should advise him to begin with those which relate to the intrinsic evidence of our religion, then to proceed to what regards the extrinsic evidence; first prophecy, because most nearly related to the former branch, then miracles, and lastly, every collateral confirmation that may be brought from history. But as it rarely happens, that one can prosecute a plan of this kind in the order or manner in which it is proposed, there is no great matter, though you take occasion of perusing the books of the greatest name on the one side or the other as they fall in your way. The only thing I insist on, is, that this study ought to be posterior altogether to the study of sacred writ and sacred history, if you would enter into it with understanding, if you would not expose yourselves to be misled and imposed on, mistaking the specious for the solid, not enough enlightened to distinguish the plausible from the true. As to the particular questions that have arisen among Christians, those which claim our first attention are, doubtless, such as subsist between Protestants and Papists. Next to these the several distinguishing tenets which characterize the various tribes or sects, that come under the common name of Protestant—Lutherans, Socinians, Arminians, Calvinists, Antinomians; and to these we may add those questions which have been for some time hotly agitated in this island; for though several of them are in themselves apparently of little moment, yet they have been productive of momentous consequences. Such are the questions in relation to the externals of worship and forms of government, about ceremonies, sacraments, and ordination, and which constitute the principal matters in dispute between the church of England and Dissenters, and by which several of our sects, such as Anabaptists, Nonjurors, and Quakers, are chiefly discriminated. As to the numerous controversies which have in former ages made a noise in the church, and are now extinct, or which are still agitated in distant regions, Greece or Asia for example, it is enough with regard to these, to know what church history hath recorded concerning their rise, progress, and decline; concerning the quibbles and phrases (for we can rarely call them prin-

ciples) which have afforded the chief matter of their altercation. I do not speak in this manner, as if all our controversies in the West were of themselves of greater importance than the eastern disputes, or as if the modern were superior to the ancient. I am far from thinking, that the cavils and logomachies of our Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians, Remonstrants, Antiremonstrants, and Universalists of the last age, or of our Seceders—both burgesses and antiburgesses, Reliefmen, Cameronians, Moravians, and Sandemanians, are one jot more intelligible or more edifying, than those of the Sabellians, Eutychians and Nestorians and Monothelites and Monophysites, and a thousand other ancient and oriental distinctions. The only thing that can give superior consequence to the former with us, is their vicinity in time and place, and the propriety there is, that for the sake of others, the Christian pastor should be prepared for warding the blows of those adversaries, to whom his people may be exposed. I say for the sake of others, for we may venture to affirm, that no man of common understanding; who hath candidly and assiduously studied holy writ in the manner we have recommended, can find the smallest occasion for his own sake of entering into such labyrinths of words, such extravagant ravings, as would disgrace even the name of sophistry; for even that term, bad as it is, implies art and ingenuity, and at least an appearance of reason, which their wild declamation can very rarely boast. I am not of the mind, that the student should think it necessary to inquire into the several grounds and pleas of all the above mentioned sects and parties. Some of them, as the principal heads of our disputes with Romanists, and the chief questions that have been started concerning the divinity of Christ, his expiation of sin by the sacrifice of himself, and concerning the operation of the Spirit, it will be proper to canvass more thoroughly. As to those of less note, since it is chiefly for the sake of others our theologian studies such questions, he must judge how far it is needful by the situation in which he finds himself.

LECTURE VI.

Method of prosecuting our Inquiries in Polemic Divinity—The use to be made of Scholia, Paraphrases, and Commentaries—Danger of relying on human guidance in matters of Religion.

I now come more particularly to the method of prosecuting these inquiries in polemic divinity. The briefest, and therefore, not the worst way, is by means of systems. And of these, I own, I generally like the shortest best. My reason is, that all of them, without exception, have, on certain topics, and in some degree or other, departed from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. They have indulged too much to imagination, and fallen at times into the dotage about questions and strifes of words which minister contention, and not godly edifying, and they have not sufficiently known, or acknowledged, the limits on those sublime subjects, which God hath assigned to the human faculties. It ought never to be forgotten by the student, that the Deity hath prescribed bounds to the human mind, as well as the mighty ocean, and in effect tells us in his word, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther, and here shall thy airy flights, thy proud excursions, be staid." If the student can, let him provide himself in some of the most approved systems on the different sides. 'Tis error, not truth, vice, not virtue, that fears the light. You may rest assured of it, that if any teacher exclaims against such a fair and imparital inquiry, and would limit you to the works of one side only, the reason is, whatever he may pretend, and however much he may disguise it even from himself, he is more solicitous to make you his own follower, than the follower of Christ, and a blind retainer to the sect to which he has attached himself, than a well instructed friend of truth, without any partial respects to persons or parties. On reading an article in one system, let him peruse the correspondent article in the others, and examine impartially by scripture as he proceeds; and in this manner, let him advance from one article to another, till he hath canvassed the whole. 'Tis more than probable, that on [some points he will conclude them all to be in the wrong; because all may go farther than holy writ affords a foundation for deciding, a thing by no means uncommon: but in no case, wherein they differ, can more than one be in the right. If he shall find it expedient afterwards to inquire more narrowly into some branches of controversy,

he will have an opportunity of reading books written on purpose on both sides the question. If he should not have it in his power to consult different systems, he will find a good deal of some of our principal controversies in Burnet's exposition of the articles, and Pearson on the Creed. When thus far advanced, he may occasionally, as he finds a difficulty (and in my opinion he ought not otherwise) consult scholia and commentaries. Of these I like the first best, both because they are briefer, and because they promise less. The scholiast proposes only to assist you in interpreting some passages, which, in the course of his study, he has met with things that serve to illustrate; whereas the commentator sets out with the express purpose of explaining every thing. I have the less faith in him on that account, and am ready to say with Horace, "*Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu.*"*

I own, for I will tell you freely what I think, that of all the kinds of expositors, I like *least* the paraphrast. There is in him, an appearance of presumption, both in giving what he seems to imagine a more proper style to the inspired writer, and in his manner of interweaving his own sentiments indiscriminately with those delivered by unerring wisdom, with which neither the commentator nor the scholiast is chargeable; for in these the text and commentary are never confounded by being blended. Another fault in paraphrases, of which few or no commentaries, that I know of, can be accused, is that you have, by way of explanation, in the former, to wit the paraphrase, the sentiments of the paraphrast alone; whereas in the latter, the commentary, you have often the opinions of others also, with their reasons, which, notwithstanding the partiality of the relater, will to the judicious reader often appear preferable. I do not say, however, that paraphrase can never be a useful mode of explication, though I own, that the cases wherein it may be reckoned not improper, nor altogether unuseful, are not numerous. As the only valuable aim of this species of exposition is to give greater perspicuity to the text, obscurity is the only reasonable plea for employing it. When the style is extremely concise or figurative, or when there are frequent allusions to customs or incidents now not generally known, to add as much as is necessary for supplying an ellipsis, explaining an unusual figure, or suggesting an unknown fact or custom alluded to, may serve to render scripture more intelligible, without taking much from its energy by the para-

* What will this pretender exhibit worthy of such boasting?

phrastic dress it is put in. But if the use and occasions of paraphrase be only such, as have been now represented, it is evident, that there are but a few books of holy writ, and but certain portions of those few, that require to be treated in this manner. No historical piece is written with greater simplicity and perspicuity than the history contained in the Bible, and both as to facts and moral instructions, we have not any thing more eminent in this respect, than the gospels. Yet nothing is more common than the attempt of paraphrasing these. And indeed the notions, which the generality of paraphrasts seem to entertain on this subject are curious. If we judge from their productions, we must conclude, that they have considered such a size of subject matter (if I may be indulged in the expression) as affording a proper foundation for a composition of such a magnitude, and have therefore laid it down as a maxim, from which in their practice they do not often depart, that the most commodious way of giving to the work the proposed extent, is that equal portions of the text (perspicuous or obscure it matters not) should be equally protracted.* Thus regarding only quantity, they view their text, and parcel it, and treat it in much the same manner as gold-beaters and wire drawers do the metals on which their art is employed. Verbosity is the proper character of this kind of composition. The professed design of the paraphrast is to say in many words what his text expresseth in few: accordingly all the writers of this class must be at pains to provide themselves in a sufficient stock of synonymas, epithets, expletives, circumlocutions and tautologies, which are in fact the necessary implements of their craft. A deficiency of words is no doubt oftener than the contrary, the cause of obscurity. *Brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio.*† But this evil may also be the effect of an exuberance. By a multiplicity of words the sentiment is not set off and accommodated, but like David equipt in Saul's armour, it is encumbered and opprest.

Yet this is not the only, nor perhaps the worst consequence resulting from this manner of treating sacred writ. In the very best compositions of this kind, that can be expected, the gospel may be compared to a rich wine of a high flavour, diluted in such a quantity of water, as renders it extremely vapid. This would be the case if the paraphrase (which is indeed hardly possible) took no tincture from the opinions of the paraphrast, but exhibited faithfully, though insipidly, the sentiments of the text. Whereas in all those para-

* See Philosophy of Rhetoric, Book III. Chap. 2.

† I labor to be brief, I become obscure.

phrases we have seen, the gospel may more justly be compared to such a wine as hath been mentioned, so much adulterated with a liquor of a very different taste and quality, that little or nothing of its original relish and properties can be discovered. Accordingly in one paraphrase, Jesus Christ appears in the character of a bigotted papist, in another of a flaming Protestant; in one he argues with all the sophistry of the Jesuit, in another he declaims with all the fanaticism of the Jansenist; in one you trace the metaphysical ratiocinations of Arminius, in another you recognise the bold conclusions of Gomarus; and you hear the language of a man who has thoroughly imbibed the system of one or another of our Christian rabbies. So various and so opposite are the characters, which in those performances our Lord is made to sustain, and the dialects which he is made to speak. How different is his own character and dialect? If we be susceptible of the impartiality, and have attained the knowledge requisite to constitute us proper judges in these matters, we shall find, in what he says, nothing that can be thought to favour the subtle disquisitions of a sect. His language is not, like that of all dogmatists, the language of a bastard philosophy, which under the pretence of methodising religion, hath corrupted it, and in less or more tinged all the parties into which christendom is divided. His language is not so much the language of the head, as of the heart; his object is not science, but wisdom, his discourses accordingly abound more in sentiments, than in opinions. His diction in general is so plain, and his instructions in the main are so obvious and striking, that it is scarcely possible to conceive another design that any man can have in paraphrasing them, than to give what I may call an evangelical dress to his own notions, to make the passages of our Lord's history, his sayings and parables, serve as a kind of vehicle for conveying into the minds of the readers the opinions of the expositor. And is not this actually the effect they commonly produce in their too implicit and habitual readers? Are you willing to call the ingenious and learned Erasmus, your father and leader and master in religious truths? Do you desire to understand Christianity no otherwise than he is pleased to exhibit it? Have recourse to his Latin paraphrase of the New Testament. Seek the religion of Jesus only there, and your end is answered. Would you rather pay this homage to some of our English interpreters? Suppose for example the mild, the dispassionate, the abstract, the rational Dr. Clarke. Let his paraphrase on the gospel serve you, as all the information needful of the history and

teaching of Jesus : or if the devout, the warm, the serious Dr. Doddridge more engages you, make his Family Expositor your only counsellor as to the mind and will of Christ. And these methods, I'll answer for them, are the surest and most effectual, for making you become in religion the servants and disciples of men. But if, on the contrary, it is neither the gospel of Erasmus, nor the gospel of Clarke, nor the gospel of Doddridge, but the gospel of Jesus Christ, that you want to be acquainted with ; if you would not that your faith should stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God ; if sensible, that you are bought with a price, you are resolved not to be the servants of men ; if you gratefully and generously purpose to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, to call no man father on earth, having one Father who is in heaven, and to call no man rabbi, leader, head or master on the earth, knowing that ye yourselves are all brethren, and have one leader, head and master Christ, who is at the right hand of God ; if this, I say, is your settled purpose, read, habitually read his history and divine lessons, as they are recorded by those, whom he himself hath employed, and whom his Spirit hath guided in the work, the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

I shall tell you honestly my opinion. I have consulted paraphrases occasionally, and those too, written on different sides. I have compared them carefully with the original work they pretended to illustrate ; and abstracting from all other faults and defects, I have always found them, upon the whole, much inferior to the text in point of perspicuity. The latter hath ever appeared to me the more intelligible of the two. I do not say, that you may not consult them occasionally, as you would any other kind of exposition or commentary. But I repeat it, with regard to all kinds of interpretation whatever, that it is only occasionally, as when some difficulty occurs of which one is at the time at a loss to think of a satisfactory solution, or when one is desirous to examine, on a particular point, the different hypotheses of different parties, that we should have recourse to them. My idea with regard to commentators, scholiasts, paraphrasts, and the whole tribe of expositors, is, that they are to be consulted in the same way, and no otherwise, than we do glossaries and dictionaries ; which is only when any thing perplexeth us, and we think we cannot do easily without them. But no one of them whatever, ought to be made our guide and conductor in carrying us forward through the sacred pages.

Further in the choice of those we should consult ; there can be no doubt but those who have been most eminent for their critical knowledge and freedom of spirit (such as becomes men not servilely attached to a particular sect or party) are entitled to the preference. The learning, as well as the critical acumen and ingenuity of Grotius, have stamped a value upon his commentaries, especially on the gospels, which has hardly been equalled by any that has come after him. Yet I am far from saying, he is to be followed implicitly. He has fallen into gross mistakes, which men of much inferior genius have detected and avoided. Hammond and Whitby, as commentators, have their merit. Maldonat, though a Romish commentator, is not unworthy the attention of the impartial searcher after truth. But still it must be remembered, that they are to be consulted occasionally only, and we are to exercise our own judgments in deciding. In arguments and objections, as well as in textuary difficulties, the student's first resource should be his own reflections ; when the sense of any portion of scripture is concerned, a critical examination of the passage and other similar passages should come next, and when these do not answer, the aid of scholiasts, &c. should be the last resource. Let it be a standing maxim, that the student's business is more an habitual exercise of reflection, than barely of reading and remembrance. Are we no longer babes ? Have we arrived at some maturity in Christian knowledge ? Are our faculties at length enlarged and strengthened by exercise, and shall we hesitate to employ these faculties, when to leave them unemployed, is the surest way possible to debilitate them ? When we may walk like men ; shall we require to be carried, or at least to be led by the hand, or supported by leading-strings like children ?

I know there are many very serious persons, who nevertheless, attached by custom to human guidance in matters of religion, will not be able to relish such an indiscriminate rejection of expositors. One favourite author at least they would have excepted, and cannot allow themselves to think, that one is not more secure against error by the help of his direction, than by the light of holy writ alone. Nothing is more difficult than to convince men of the most glaring inconsistencies, to which, prior to reflection, they have become habituated ; and which therefore have acquired an inveteracy hardly to be cured. Scripture, they readily admit, to be the only divine and infallible rule ; all human interpreters, they will frankly acknowledge, to be fallible,

and yet 'tis manifest that in human guidance they think there is greater safety. They will indeed tell you, that it is by the unerring decision of scripture that all the doctrines of erring men are to be judged; and yet what the sense of scripture is, they will learn no otherwise, than from the doctrines of erring men. Can any thing be more manifest, than that it is an empty compliment they pay the scriptures, and that their only confidence is in man? Suppose, for example, that a body politic, or community, were to constitute certain persons judges of all those who should be impeached before them in any cause civil or criminal, declaring themselves resolved to see that the sentences of the judges shall be rigorously executed, but at the same time signifying that they were also resolved to constitute the parties the interpreters of the sentences in their own case, and that according to their interpretation only, the execution was to proceed; could any thing be more absurd, more selfsubversive than such a constitution? Could any thing be more nugatory than the power they pretended to confer on the judges? Yet is not the manner in which scripture is complimented, by almost all sects, at least all sectarists, with an authority merely nominal, exactly similar? Shall I be thought to endanger the cause of truth, the cause of Protestantism and of the reformation, by insisting so much on what this very cause hath laid down as a fundamental principle? Is not scripture, with all Protestants, the only tribunal, in the last resort, in all questions of faith? Do they admit an appeal from the verdict of this supreme arbitress, either to the judgment of individuals, or to that of any societies of men, whatever denomination you may please to give them, or with whatever jurisdiction you may think fit to vest them? Is not her decision, on the contrary, admitted on all hands to be final? Hear the church of England on this point. Article sixth, entitled, "*Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.* Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." And again, article twenty-first, entitled, "*Of the Authority of General Councils.* When they (general councils) be gathered together (for as much as they be an assembly of men whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and word of God) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor author-

ity, unless it may be declared, that they be taken out of holy scripture." Hear on the same head the avowed sentiments of the church of Scotland. Westminster Confession, first chapter, entitled, *Of the Holy Scripture*, sixth paragraph. "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added." Again, chapter thirty-first, entitled, *Of Synods and Councils*, fourth paragraph. "All synods or councils, since the apostles' time, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred, therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be read as an help in both."

I am aware that an argument may be drawn (which to some will no doubt appear plausible) from these very declarations. If private men have erred, if even synods and councils have erred, would it not be extreme arrogance in me, may one say, unassisted and alone in my inquiries, to think that I should escape error altogether? But how easily is this plea retorted. If private persons, if even the wise and learned have erred, if synods and councils have erred, what security have I in their direction? Yet that all these have erred, egregiously erred, appears unquestionably from their mutual contradictions and jars. On the other side, there is no such ground of fear from the aforesaid reflection (as one would at first imagine) that in our inquiries into scripture we shall err materially, even though alone and unassisted by any human expositor or council. I have before now assigned the reason, why human interpretations of scripture, whether private or what hath been called authoritative, are, notwithstanding the perspicuity of that book, so infinitely various. The same would be the fate of any book whatever that were treated in the same manner. Men begin with deriving their opinions from another source, and being perfectly full of these opinions and wedded to them, they have recourse to scripture, not to discover the doctrines contained there, but to discover there their own opinions, that is, in other words, to exercise all their art and ingenuity to give such a turn to the expressions of scripture, as will make them seem to authorize their favourite notions. Often men's worldly interest too, which blindeth even the wise, is concerned on a side. That scripture should be intelligible, is implied in the very idea of its being a revelation of the will of God. That this revelation stands in need of a revelation in order to be understood, that is, in other

words, is itself no revelation at all, is indeed the doctrine of the Romanists, and a doctrine of importance with them, inconsistent as it is, to make room for their infallible interpreter. But the Protestant doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture, without any such interpreter, doth clearly imply, that it is possest of all necessary perspicuity. How strongly is this affirmed in the first chapter of the Westminster Confession above quoted, the seventh paragraph? "All things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them." In the judgment of the reformed churches therefore, in the judgment of our own in particular, the study of scripture itself is not only the safest, but the only safe way of arriving at the knowledge of divine truth, since it is both the only infallible rule, and in all essential matters sufficiently perspicuous. And permit me to add, were there greater risk of error than there is, error itself must be less culpable to those who enter seriously and impartially on this examination, and thus take the best method in their power for avoiding it, than it is to those, who blindly and lazily admit opinions for no better reason, than because they are the opinions of the country, or of the sect in which they have been educated, or of some celebrated doctor whom they have been early taught to revere. Such, it is manifest, have no better reason for their being Christians, than the Jews have for their not being Christians, the Turks for their being Mahometans, or the Tartars for their being pagans; and whatever apology may be made for the illiterate, and those whose time is mostly occupied in earning daily bread, surely there is no excuse for those, who have had the advantage of a liberal education, and who have the prospect of serving in the church as lights to others.

But should any be disposed to object, How is it possible to study by the aid of human compositions, and avoid the influence of human teachers? Though the method you have recommended is by no means that which is commonly pursued; yet it requires a good deal of reading and study, besides that of scripture, as well as the common method. You do not enjoin us to begin with systems and controversies, and commentators, and scholiasts, and paraphrasts; on the contrary, with these, you tell us, the study of theology should be concluded and not commenced: but do you not require us to

apply directly to certain histories and antiquities, do you not desire us to betake ourselves to grammars and lexicons, to have recourse to the study of languages, particularly the Oriental and the Greek, to become acquainted with the scriptures in the original tongues, and with the ancient translation of the seventy? All this is most certain truth; but do you observe no difference in the effect which these different methods may be expected naturally to produce? We recommend the study of the scriptures, as containing the whole of Christian theology. But then the scriptures were written neither in this age, nor in this country, nor in our language. We have indeed a translation of them, which is in the main a good one, but which, though it may serve the purposes of the generality of Christians, ought not to satisfy the ministers of religion, who should be in a capacity of solving the doubts and removing the difficulties of others. We do not ascribe infallibility to any translator; and therefore when this term is applied to holy writ, it is of the original only, that it must in strictness be understood. Had a complete revelation been given at once in our own age and country, and had been committed to writing in our own tongue, it is manifest that little or no human learning would have been necessary. But in all the respects mentioned the actual case greatly differed. A long tract of ages is comprehended between the commencement and the sealing or conclusion of this revelation, the languages in which it is written are foreign, the country which was the scene of those wonderful exhibitions it contains of divine power and mercy is remote, and the period, in which that whole manifestation was closed, is at the distance of many centuries from the present. Out of these very circumstances duly attended to, results the necessity of all those studies we have recommended. If the oracles of God are delivered in foreign languages, it is certain, that unless we are supplied with supernatural means of coming at this knowledge, the study of the languages is the only natural and ordinary means. It were easy to show the necessity of all the other studies from the same principles. The scriptures were written in distant ages, and allude to many transactions, then, but not now, familiarly known in the world, addressed to people who differed from us, as much in manners, ceremonies, customs, and opinions, as in language. An acquaintance with these transactions and differences, therefore, as far as we can attain it, is in effect, as hath been often hinted already, a more thorough acquaintance with the scriptural idiom and dialect. If after this we proceed to the

study of systems and commentaries and controversies, we have acquired a fund of our own, from which we may form a judgment in regard to their jarring sentiments. But if without any such fund for judging, without a competency of knowledge either in scripture language or scripture history, we have immediate recourse to system makers and expositors and controversialists, we are perfectly bewildered, and must therefore either deliver ourselves up implicitly to the guidance of some one or more whom we pitch upon at random, or be lost in absolute scepticism. The study of language and history doth not indeed present you with particular opinions formed upon particular passages of scripture; it is for that very reason quite above the suspicion of partiality. But it doth what is much more valuable. It furnishes us with those first principles of knowledge, from which an attentive and judicious person will be enabled to draw proper conclusions, and form just opinions for himself. The other way is indeed better adapted to gratify the laziness of the sciolist, who would be thought learned, but cannot bear, even for the sake of learning, to be at the least expense of thought and reflection.

The man who advises such an easy method, which I acknowledge is by far the commonest, is like one who tells you, "This writing, the contents of which you are anxious to be acquainted with, you need not take the trouble to peruse yourself. It is but dimly written, and we have now only twilight. I have better eyes, and am acquainted with the character. Do but attend, and I shall read it distinctly in your hearing." On the other hand, he who with me advises the other method, is like one who says, "Take this writing into your own hand. I shall procure you a supply of light, and though the character is rather old, yet with some attention, in comparing one part with another, you will soon be familiarized to it, and may then read it for yourself." In a matter of little moment, and where there can be no danger of deception, it may be said, and justly said, the first method is the best, because the easiest and quickest. But suppose it is an affair of great importance to you, and that there is real danger of deception; suppose further, that your anxiety having led you to employ different readers, the consequence hath been, that each reader, to your great astonishment, discovers things in the writing, which were not discovered by the rest; nay more, that the discoveries of the different readers are contradictory to one another; would you not then be satisfied, that the only part a reasonable man could take, would be to recur to the

second method mentioned ? Now this is precisely the case with the point in hand.

I shall illustrate the difference between these methods by one other example, and then have done. You intend to travel into a foreign country, where you propose to transact a great deal of business with the natives. You go, I shall first suppose, without knowing any thing of the language of the country. In all the affairs you have to transact with the inhabitants, as you find yourself unable to convey to them directly your sentiments, or to apprehend theirs, in the only manner they are able to communicate them ; as you daily receive letters, which you cannot read, or give a return to, in a language that can be read by them, you are compelled every moment to have recourse to interpreters, a method extremely cumbersome tedious, and dangerous at the best. You are entirely at the mercy of those interpreters ; their want of knowledge, or their want of honesty, may be equally prejudicial to you. A very slight blunder of theirs arising from an imperfect acquaintance with either language, may be productive of consequences the most ruinous to your affairs. Let us now again suppose you take a different method. You make it your first object to study the language, and are become a tolerable proficient in it, before you go abroad, or at least before you enter on any important business with the natives. This, though a harder task at first setting out, greatly facilitates your intercourse with the people afterwards, and gives you a certain security and independence in all your transactions with them, which it is impossible you could ever have otherwise enjoyed. You may then occasionally and safely, where any doubt ariseth, consult an interpreter ; the resources in point of knowledge, which you have provided for yourself, will prove a sufficient check on him, to prevent his having it in his power to deceive you in a matter of moment. I shall leave you, gentlemen, to make the application of these two suppositions at your leisure.

The first of these is the fact that the law is a science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The second is the fact that the law is a social science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The third is the fact that the law is a practical science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The fourth is the fact that the law is a moral science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The fifth is the fact that the law is a political science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The sixth is the fact that the law is an economic science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The seventh is the fact that the law is a historical science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The eighth is the fact that the law is a philosophical science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The ninth is the fact that the law is a religious science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society. The tenth is the fact that the law is a scientific science, and as such, it is not a mere collection of rules and regulations, but a system of principles which govern the conduct of men in society.

ON PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

LECTURE I.

Importance of the Study, and Objections against it answered—Helps for the Attainment of the Art.

IT is not enough for the Christian minister, that he be instructed in the science of theology, unless he has the skill to apply his knowledge, to answer the different purposes of the pastoral charge. And the first thing, that on this article seems to merit our attention, is the consideration of the minister, in the character of a public speaker; and that, both in his addresses to God on the part of the people in worship, and his addresses to the people on the part of God in preaching. Of the importance of this last part of the character, as a public teacher, no one can reasonably doubt, who considers that it was one great part, if not the principal part of the charge which the apostles received from our Lord, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." And again, Mark xvi. 15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And without derogating from those solemn institutions of our religion, which in after times came to be denominated sacraments, preaching may in one view, at least, be said to be of more consequence than they, in as much as a suitable discharge of the business of a teacher undoubtedly requires abilities superior to those requisite for the proper performance of the other, a part in comparison merely ministerial or official. It is besides the great means of conversion as well as of edification. "Faith cometh by hearing," says the apostle. The ministry of our Lord, to his kinsmen the Jews, consisted chief-

ly in teaching ; for the evangelist, John iv. 2, expressly tells us that Jesus baptized none ; this, as comparatively an underwork, was intrusted entirely to his disciples. And the apostle Paul acquaints the Corinthians i. 1, 17, that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel ; that the latter and not the former was the principal end of his mission. When it pleased God by the conversion of Cornelius the Roman centurion to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, no less a person than Peter, the first of the apostolical college, was selected for announcing to him and his family the gospel of Christ ; but after they were converted by his preaching, the apostle did not consider it as any impropriety to commit the care of baptizing them to meaner hands. “ He (that is, Peter,) commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” Acts x. 48. What hath been said, however, is by no means intended to arraign the propriety of limiting to a lower number, in churches which are already constituted, the power of dispensing the sacraments, than is done in regard to the power of preaching. The near connection which the former has with discipline and order in a Christian society already established, affords a very good reason for this difference. But if teaching is a matter of so much consequence, and if the proper discharge of this duty is a matter of principal difficulty, it ought doubtless to employ a considerable part of the student’s time and attention that he may be properly prepared for it. Indeed it may be said, that the study of the science of theology is itself a preparation, and in part it no doubt is so, as it furnishes him with the materials ; but the materials alone will not serve his purpose, unless he has acquired the art of using them. And it is this art in preaching which I denominate *Christian* or *pulpit eloquence*. To know is one thing ; and to be capable of communicating knowledge is another.

I am sensible, however, that there are many pious Christians, who are startled at the name of eloquence when applied to the Christian teacher ; they are disposed to consider it as setting an office, which in its nature is spiritual, and in its origin divine, too much on a footing with those which are merely human and secular. And this turn of thinking I have always found to proceed from one or other of these two causes ; either from a mistake of what is meant by eloquence, or from a misapprehension of some passages of holy writ in relation to the sacred function. First, it arises from a mistaken notion of the import of the word. It often happens both among philosophers and divines that violent and endless disputes are car-

ried on by adverse parties, which, were they to begin by settling a definition of the term whereon the question turns, would vanish in an instant. Were these people then, who appear to differ from us, on the propriety of employing eloquence, to give an explication of the ideas they comprehend under the term *eloquence* or oratory, we should doubtless get from them some such account as this, a knack, or artifice, by which the periods of a discourse are curiously and harmoniously strung together, decorated with many flowery images, the whole entirely calculated to set off the speaker's art by pleasing the ear and amusing the fancy of the hearers, but by no means calculated either to inform their understandings or to engage their hearts. Perhaps those people will be surprised, when I tell them, that commonly no discourses whatever, not even the homeliest, have less of true eloquence, than such frothy harangues, as perfectly suit their definition. If this, then, is all they mean to inveigh against under the name *eloquence*, I will join issue with them with all my heart. Nothing can be less worthy the study or attention of a wise man, and much more may this be said of a Christian pastor, than such a futile acquisition as that above described. But if, on the contrary, nothing else is meant by eloquence, in the use of all the wisest and the best who have written on the subject, but that art or talent, whereby the speech is adapted to produce in the hearer the great end which the speaker has, or at least ought to have principally in view, it is impossible to doubt the utility of the study; unless people will be absurd enough to question, whether there be any difference between speaking to the purpose and speaking from the purpose, expressing one's self intelligibly or unintelligibly, reasoning in a manner that is conclusive and satisfactory, or in such a way as can convince nobody, fixing the attention and moving the affections of an audience, or leaving them in a state perfectly listless and unconcerned.

But, as I signified already, there are prejudices against this study in the Christian orator, arising from another source, the promises of the immediate influence of the divine Spirit, the commands of our Lord to his disciples, to avoid all concern and solicitude on this article, and the example of some of the apostle who disclaimed expressly the advantages resulting from the study of rhetoric, or indeed of any human art, or institute whatever. In answer to such objections, I must beg leave to ask, Are we not in the promises of our Saviour, to distinguish those, which were made to his disciples, merely as Christians, or his followers in the way to the

kingdom, from those made indeed to the same persons, but considered in the character of apostles, the promulgators of his doctrine among Jews and pagans, and the first founders of his church? Are we entitled to apply to ourselves those promises made to the apostles, or even the first Christians, manifestly for the conviction and conversion of an infidel world? "These signs," says Christ, "shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Do we now expect such signs to follow upon our faith? And is not the promise of immediate inspiration on any emergency (which is doubtless a miraculous gift as well as those above enumerated) to be considered as of the same nature, and given for the same end? And ought not all these precepts, to which promises of this supernatural kind are annexed as the reason, to be understood with the same restriction? When our Lord foretold his disciples, that they should be brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake, he adds, "Settle it in your hearts not to meditate before what you shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." It is manifest the obligation of the precept can only be explained by a proper apprehension of the extent of the promise. But the truth is, that few or none, in these our days, would consider premeditation in such circumstances as either unlawful or improper. Who, even among those who inveigh most bitterly against the study of eloquence for the pulpit, does ever so much as pretend that we ought not to meditate, or so much as think, on any subject before we preach upon it? And yet the letter of the precept, nay, and the spirit too, strikes more directly against particular premeditation, than against the general study of the art of speaking. It is more a particular application of the art, than the art itself, that is here pointed at. And as to what the great apostle of the Gentiles hath said on this article, it will serve, I am persuaded, to every attentive reader, as a confirmation of what has been advanced above, in regard to the true meaning of such promises and precepts, and the limitations with which they ought to be understood. Well might he renounce every art which man's wisdom teacheth, whose speech was accompanied with the demonstration of the spirit and of power; that is, with those miraculous gifts, which were so admirably calculated to silence contradiction, and to convince

the most incredulous. But the truth is, there is not one argument can be taken from those precepts and examples, that will not equally conclude against all human learning whatsoever, as against the study of rhetoric. Because the apostles could preach to men of every nation without studying their language, in consequence of the gift of tongues with which they were supernaturally endowed, shall we think to convert strangers, with whose speech we are totally unacquainted; and not previously apply to grammars, and lexicons, and other helps, for attaining the language? Or because Paul, as he himself expressly tells us, received the knowledge of the gospel by immediate inspiration, shall we neglect the study of the scriptures and other outward means of instruction? There have been, I own, some enthusiasts who have carried the matter as far as this. And though hardly any person of the least reflection, would argue in such a manner now, it must be owned that the very same premises, by which any human art or institute in itself useful, is excluded, will equally answer the purposes of such fanatics in excluding all. And to the utility, and even importance of the rhetorical art, scripture itself bears testimony. Is it not mentioned by the sacred historian in recommendation of Apollos, that he was "an eloquent man," as well as mighty in the scriptures? And is not his success manifestly ascribed, under God, to these advantages? There is no mention of any supernatural gifts, which he could receive only by the imposition of the hands of an apostle; and it appears from the history, that before he had any interview with the apostles, immediately after his conversion, he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. The very words used by the inspired penmen are such as are familiar with rhetoricians in relation to the forensic eloquence, *Ευτοως γαρ τοις Ιουδαιοις διακατηλεγχετο*, *Acriter, vehementer, magna contentione*. Now though it is not permitted to us to reach the celestial heights of a Peter or a Paul, I see nothing to hinder our aspiring to the humbler attainments of an Apollos. But enough, and perhaps too much, for obviating objections, which I cannot allow myself to think, will have great weight with gentlemen, who have been so long employed in the study of the learned languages, and of the liberal arts and sciences. However, when one hath occasion to hear such arguments (if indeed they deserve to be called so) advanced by others, it may be of some utility to be provided with an answer.

The next point, and which is of the greatest consequence, is, In what manner this art or talent may be attained, at least as much of it as is suited to the business of preaching, and is on moral and religious subjects best adapted to the ends of instruction and persuasion? When I gave you a general sketch of my plan, I observed on this article that in a great measure the talents required in the preacher are such as are necessary to him in common with every other public speaker, whatever be the scene of his appearances, whether it be his lot to deliver his orations in the senate, at the bar, or from the pulpit. Now what the preacher must have in common with those of so many other and very different professions, it cannot be expected that here we should treat particularly, especially when it is considered how many other things have a preferable title to our notice. What indeed is peculiar in the eloquence of the pulpit will deserve a more particular consideration. But though we do not from this place propose to give an institute of rhetoric, it will not be improper to give some directions in relation to the theory of it, and particularly to the reading both of ancient and modern authors, whence the general knowledge of the subject, which is too much neglected by theological students, may be had. When we consider the nature of this elegant and useful art with any degree of attention, we shall soon be convinced, that it is a certain improvement on the arts of grammar and logic; on which it founds, and without which it could have no existence. On the other hand, without this, these arts would lose much of their utility and end, for it is by the art of rhetoric, that we are enabled to make our knowledge in language, and skill in reasoning, turn to the best account for the instruction and persuasion of others. The wise in heart," saith Solomon, "shall be called prudent, but the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning."*

Now the best preparation for an orator, on whatever kind of theatre he shall be called to act, is to understand thoroughly the discursive art, and to be well acquainted with the words, structure, and idiom of the language which he is to employ. By skill in the former, I do not mean being well versed in the artificial dialectic of the schools, though this, I acknowledge, doth not want its use, but being conversant in the natural and genuine principles and grounds of reasoning, whether derived from sense or memory, from comparison of related ideas, from testimony, experience, or analogy.

* See the Philosophy of Rhetoric, vol. i. book I. ch. iv. Of the Relation which Eloquence bears to Logic and to Grammar.

School logic, as was well observed by Mr. Locke, is much better calculated for the detection of sophistry than the discovery of truth. Its forms of argumentation in mood and figure carry too much artifice, not to say mechanism, in the very front of them, to suit the free and disengaged manner of the orator, in whom every thing ought to appear perfectly natural and easy, and nothing that looks like contrivance or insidious design. But though the logician's manner is not to be copied by the public speaker, his art will be of use, sometimes in furnishing topics of argument, often in suggesting hints to assist in refutation. But true logic, it must be acknowledged, is best studied not in a scholastic system, but in the writings of the most judicious and best reasoners on the various subjects supplied by history, science and philosophy. And with regard to language, as it is the English alone with which the preachers in this country, a very few excepted, are concerned as public speakers, they ought not only to study its structure and analogy in our best grammarians, but endeavour to familiarize themselves to its idiom, and to acquire a sufficient stock of words and a certain facility in using them, by an acquaintance with our best English authors. We have the greater need of this, as in this part of the island we labour under some special disadvantages, which, that our compositions may be more extensively useful, it is our duty to endeavour to surmount.

As to the rhetorical art itself, in this particular the moderns appear to me to have made hardly any advance or improvement upon the ancients. I can say, at least, of most of the performances in the way of institute, which I have had an opportunity of reading on this subject, either in French or English, every thing valuable is servilely copied from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, in whose writings, especially Quintilian's *Institutions*, and Cicero's books *de inventione*, those called *ad Herenium*, and his dialogues *De oratore*, every public speaker ought to be conversant. To these it will not be amiss to add Longinus on the sublime, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and some others. And as, in every art, the examples of eminent performers will be found to the full as instructive to the student, as the precepts laid down by the teacher, antiquity does here at least furnish us with the best models in the orations of Cicero in Latin, and in those of Æschines and Demosthenes in Greek. Of modern authors considered in both views, as teachers of the art, and as performers, I would recommend what Rollin and Fenelon have written on the subject, the sermons, and also the lectures on

eloquence* lately published by the ingenious and truly eloquent Dr. Blair; to which give me leave to add the sermons of my amiable and much lamented friend Mr. Farquhar, which, though no other than fragments, having been left unfinished by the author, who appears to have had no view to publication, and though consequently less correct in point of language, are, on account of the justness of the sentiments, and the affecting warmth with which they are written, highly admired by persons of taste and discernment.†

LECTURE II.

Of the Sentiment in Pulpit Discourses.

I AM now to consider the train of sentiment, the elocution, and the pronounciation, that are best adapted to the pulpit. Of these things I only mean at first to take a more general and cursory survey, and make such remarks on each, as will hold almost universally of all the instructions given from the pulpit, whatever the particular subject be. As to those which may suit the different sorts of sermons and other discourses to be employed by the preacher, I shall have occasion afterwards to take notice of them, when I come to inquire into the rules of composition, worthy the attention of the Christian orator, and to mark out the different kinds, whereof this branch of eloquence is susceptible.

I begin at this time with what regards the sentiments. Let it be observed, that I here use the term sentiments in the greatest latitude for the sense or thoughts. I mean thereby what may be considered as the soul of the discourse, or all the instruction of whatever kind, that is intended to be conveyed by means of the expression into the minds of the hearers. Perhaps the import of the word

* Dr. Campbell's Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence, were composed and delivered before the publication of Dr. Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric. The recommendation as above was added to the original manuscript after perusing the lectures of his friend Dr. Blair.

† Here the author introduced for his second lecture the tenth chapter of the first book of his Philosophy of Rhetoric, entitled "The different kinds of public speaking in use among the moderns, compared, with a view to their different advantages in respect of eloquence." In that chapter there are several things highly worthy of the attention of the preacher.

will be more exactly ascertained by saying, it is that in any original performance, which it behooves a translator to retain in his version into another language, whilst the expression is totally changed. Thus (to preserve the metaphor of soul and body already adopted) we may say, that a discourse in being translated undergoes a sort of transmigration. The same soul passes into a different body. For if the ideas, the sense, the information, conveyed to the hearers or readers be not the same in the version, as in the original performance, the translation is not faithful. Now all that regards the soul or sense may be distributed into these four different forms of communication, namely, *narration*, *explanation*, *reasoning*, and *moral reflection*. This last is sometimes, by way of eminence, called *sentiment*.

To the first of these, *narration*, there will be pretty frequent occasion of recourse, both for the illustration of any point of doctrine or portion of scripture wherewith the subject happens to be connected, and also for affecting the hearers in a way suitable to the particular aim of the discourse. And indeed it often happens, that nothing is better adapted to this end, than an apposite passage of history properly related. But what are the rules, it will be asked, by the due observance of which propriety in this matter may be attained? One of those most commonly recommended is, to be brief. But this rule needs explanation, as there is nothing we ought more carefully to avoid than a cold uninteresting conciseness, which is sometimes the consequence of an excessive desire of brevity. Brevity in relating, as in every thing else, is only so far commendable, as it is rendered compatible with answering all the ends of the relation. Where these are not answered, through an affectation of being very nervous and laconic, comprehending much in little, the narration ought not to be styled brief, but defective. In strictness, the relation ought to contain enough, and neither more nor less. But what is enough? That can be determined only by a proper attention to the end for which the narration was introduced. A narrative may contain enough to render the story and its connection intelligible to the hearer, yet not enough to fix his attention and engage his heart, and may therefore be justly chargeable with a faulty conciseness. But if this extreme ought to be carefully guarded against, it well deserves your notice, that the contrary, and no less dangerous, extreme of prolixity, by entering into a detail too minute and circumstantial, ought with equal care to be avoided. If, in con-

sequence of the first error, the hearer's mind remains unsatisfied, in consequence of the second, it is cloyed. Both faults can be avoided only by such a judicious selection of circumstances, as at once excludes nothing essential to the purposes of perspicuity and connection, or conducive to the principal scope of the narration, and includes nothing, that in the respects aforesaid can be deemed superfluous. Such is every circumstance that can be denominated remote, trivial, or necessarily implied in the other circumstances mentioned. But to assist the preacher in conducting such narratives, when pertinent, nothing will serve so well for a model, as the historical part of sacred writ. No where else will he find such simplicity, as brings what is said to the level of the meanest capacity, united with such dignity, as is sufficient to engage the attention of the highest. Passages of scripture history, when they happen to coincide with the speaker's view, are much preferable to those which may be taken from any other source; and that on a double account. First, it may be supposed, that not only all the serious part, but even the much greater part of the audience, being better acquainted with these, will both more readily perceive and more strongly feel the application which the preacher makes of them; and secondly, the authority of holy writ gives an additional weight to that which is the intent of the narrative. I do not say, however, that a preacher, in quoting instances, examples and authorities, ought to confine himself entirely to the sacred history. Our blessed Lord, though addressing himself only to Jews, did not hesitate to lay the foundation of some of his parables in those customs which had arisen solely from their intercourse with the Romans. Of this the parable you have, Luke xix. 12, &c. of the nobleman who travelled into a distant land, in order that he might obtain the royal power, and return king over his countrymen, is an evident instance. Such was become the general practice in all the provinces and states dependent upon Rome. The royalty was often not to be attained without applications to the Roman senate and these were often thwarted, as in the parable, by counter applications, either from the people, or from some rival for power. Nay, there is very probably in that parable an allusion to some things which had actually happened in regard to the succession of Archelaus, son of Herod, king of Judea, with which many of his hearers could not fail to be acquainted, the thing having happened but recently and in their own time. Nor was the apostle Paul at all

scrupulous in illustrating the sublimest truths of the gospel, by the exercises and diversions which obtained at that time among the idolatrous Greeks. But even in those cases wherein scripture doth not furnish the facts, it supplies us with an excellent pattern of a natural, simple and interesting manner in which the relation ought to be conducted. I shall only add on this article that the different circumstances ought to be so fitly and so naturally connected, that those which precede may easily introduce those which follow, and those which follow may appear necessarily to arise out of those which precede. This, by adding to the credibility and verisimilitude, greatly increases the effect of the whole. I shall not at this time say any thing of those qualities which more regard the expression than the thought, as there will be scope for this afterwards.

The second thing comprised under the term thought, or sentiment, was *explication*, in which I include also description and definition. And on this, the rules laid down upon the former article will equally hold good. The same care and attention will be requisite, both in culling and disposing the particulars, that the whole may be neither tedious nor unsatisfactory. In regard to disposition and arrangement, there is rather more art necessary in this case than in the former. In the former, to wit, narrative, all the material circumstances are successive, and the order of introducing them must in a great measure be determined by the order of time. But in explication, they are simultaneous, and therefore require the exercise of judgment and reflection, in assigning to each its proper place and order in the discourse. Need it be added, that in all descriptive enumerations particular care ought to be taken, that nothing foreign be comprehended, and that nothing which properly belongs to the subject be omitted. The logical rules in regard to definition are sufficiently known, and therefore shall not here be repeated. On the whole, in regard to both the preceding articles, a certain justness of apprehension is of all things the most important in a speaker. If he has not a clear conception of the matter himself, it can never be expected he should convey it to others.

The third thing mentioned as belonging to the thought, was *reasoning*. When it is considered, what a mixed society a Christian assembly for the most part is, and how little the far greater number, even of what are called the politest congregations, is accustomed to the exercise of the discursive faculty, it will be evident that any thing in the way of argument would need to be extremely simple, consisting of but a very few steps, and extremely clear,

having nothing in that is of an abstract nature, and so not easily comprehended by them, and nothing that alludes to facts which do not fall within ordinary observation. If the argument is not deduced from experience, or the common principles of the understanding, but from the import of the words of scripture, one would need to be particularly distinct in setting the sacred text before them, avoiding as much as possible, every thing that savours of subtlety, conceit, or learned criticism. Something indeed of criticism, when the point to be proved, is a point merely of revelation, cannot always be avoided. In general, however, we are warranted to say, it ought to be avoided as much as possible. The passages of holy writ, therefore, which you make choice of, in support of your doctrine, ought to be always the plainest and the most direct. Though you should perhaps find other passages, in which to a man of letters, there might appear equal or even stronger evidence, yet if such passages would require a commentary or elaborate disquisition to elucidate them, they are not so convincing to the people, and should, therefore, be let alone.

It may not be improper here, however, before we dismiss this article, to examine a little what the occasions are which require reasoning from the pulpit, and what are the different topics of argument adapted to the different natures of the subject. These last are very properly divided into practical and speculative. In the former, the preacher argues to enforce the practice of a duty recommended by him; in the latter, to gain the belief of his hearers to a tenet he thinks fit to defend. In the former case, it is his aim to evince the beauty, the propriety, the equity, the pleasantness, or the utility of such a conduct both for time and for eternity. His topics therefore are all drawn from common life and experience, from the common sense of mankind and the most explicit declarations of holy writ, topics in a great measure the same with those on which men of all conditions are wont to argue with one another, in regard to what is right and prudent in the management of their ordinary secular affairs. Such were the topics, to which our Lord himself had recourse in his parables, always illustrating the reasons and motives which ought to influence in the things of eternity, by the reasons and motives which do commonly influence us in the things of time. Such topics are consequently, if properly conducted, level to the capacities of all. Whereas in the latter case, when the subject is of doctrinal points, or points of speculation, the resources of the preacher are extremely different. His reasoning must then be drawn from the essential natures and differences of things,

and the comparison of abstract qualities, or perhaps from abstruse and critical disquisitions of the import of some dark and controverted passages of scripture, which it must be owned, are beyond the sphere of the illiterate. I would not by this be understood to mean, that controversy should never be admitted into the pulpit. We are exhorted by the apostle Jude "earnestly to contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints." And Paul in his epistles hath given us an excellent example of this laudable zeal in support of the fundamental doctrines of our religion, against those who denied or doubted them. This he shews, as on several other occasions, so in particular in the defence of the doctrine of the resurrection, and in opposition to that false dogma of the Judaizing teachers of his time, that the observance of circumcision and of the other ceremonies of the law is necessary to salvation. And indeed from the reason of the thing it is manifest, that in a religious institution founded on certain important truths or principles, through the belief of which only it can operate on the hearts and influence the lives of men, it must be of the utmost consequence to refute the contrary errors, when they appear to be creeping in or gaining ground among the people. But before the preacher attempt a refutation of this kind, there are two things he ought impartially and carefully to inquire into. First, he ought to inquire, whether the tenet he means to support be one of the great truths of religion or not. It may be a prevalent opinion, it may have a reference to the common salvation, nay more, it may be a true opinion, and yet no article of the faith which was once delivered to the saints. These articles are neither numerous nor abstruse. We cannot say so much in regard to the comments and glosses of men. Yet it is an undoubted fact, that where the former have excited one controversy in the church, the latter have produced fifty. It must therefore be of importance to him, to be well assured that he is vindicating the great oracles of unerring wisdom, and not the precarious interpretations and glosses of fallible men; that he acts the part of the genuine disciple of Christ, and not the blind follower of a merely human guide. In the former case only, he defends the cause of Christianity; in the latter, he but supports the interest of a sect or faction. In that, he contends for the faith; in this, "he dotes about questions and strifes of words, vain janglings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and involving himself in oppositions of science falsely so called." And that under this last class, the far greater part of our theological disputes are comprehended, even such as have been

too often and too hotly agitated in the pulpit, is not to be denied. Such in particular are a great many of the doctrinal controversies, which different parties of protestants have with one another. They may with great propriety be styled *λογομαχίαι*, (strifes of words, 1 Tim. vi. 4.) an emphatic term of the apostle Paul; for they are not only wars with words, but wars merely about words and phrases, where there is no discernible, or at least, no material difference in the sense; and which agreeably to the character he gives of them, "gender strifes, and minister idle disputes rather than godly edifying." The second thing which the preacher ought to inquire into, before he engage in preaching controversy, is whether the false doctrine he means to refute has any number of partizans amongst his hearers; or whether there be any immediate danger of their being seduced to that opinion. If otherwise, the introduction of such questions might possibly raise doubts where formerly there were none, and at any rate, unless managed with uncommon prudence and temper, have rather a tendency that is unfavourable to the Christian spirit, and in narrow minds is apt to beget a sort of bitterness and uncharitableness, which these dignify in themselves with the name of zeal, though in their adversaries they can clearly see its malignity. At the same time, that I give these caveats against the abuse, I by no means deny the occasional expediency and use of controversy.

As to the fourth and last species of thought mentioned, *moral reflection*, or what is sometimes peculiarly denominated sentiment; there is much less hazard that in this we should succeed. Here the preacher (if he is at all judicious in his choice) runs less risk of either growing tiresome to the more improved part of his audience, or unintelligible to those whose understandings have not been cultivated. In the former, the rational powers are addressed; in this, the heart and the conscience. Indeed, I am far from thinking, that these two kinds of addresses may not often be happily blended together; particularly, when the subject relates to moral conduct, an address of the latter kind, if interwoven with a plain narrative, will frequently prove the most effectual means of removing unfavourable prepossessions, engaging affection as well as satisfying reason, and bringing her to be of the same party. It was a method often and successfully employed by our blessed Lord, when attacked by a Jewish bigotry, on the extent that ought to be given to the love of our neighbour. The maxims of the Pharisees, like those of all bigots, of every age, nation and profession, were

very illiberal, and measuring the goodness of the universal Father, by their own contracted span, could not bear to think that those of a different nation, and still more those who differed in religious matters, could be comprehended under it. When attacked by these narrow hearted zealots, in what manner, I pray you, doth he silence contradiction, and gain every susceptible heart over to his side? Not by subtle ratiocination on the beauty of virtue, or on the eternal and unalterable fitness of things; but by a simple story, by the parable of the compassionate Samaritan, in the conclusion of which he shows, that, even their own consciences being judges, to act agreeably to the more extensive explanation of the duty, was the more amiable part, and consequently more worthy of their esteem and imitation. Again, when he would show, that even the profligate are not to be abandoned to despair, with what an amazing superiority doth he subdue the most unrelenting pharisaic pride by the parable of the prodigal? Who ever could so quickly dissipate the thickest clouds raised by inveterate prejudices and party-spirit, and render the only unequivocal standard of moral truth, the characters of the divine law engraven on the human heart, to all who are not wilfully blind, distinctly legible? Could any the most acute and elaborate dissertation on moral rectitude, or the essential qualities and relations of things, have produced half the effect, even in point of conviction, as well as of feeling? How different his method from that of the ancient sophists? But not more different than their aims. Their aim was to make men talk fluently and plausibly on every subject: his, to make them think justly, and act up-rightly.

So much shall suffice for what regards the sentiments or thoughts in general, that are adapted to the eloquence of the pulpit, whether narration, explanation, reasoning, or moral reflection. On this head, we were under a necessity of being briefer and more general, as it is here that a man's natural talents, genius, taste, and judgment, have the greatest sway; and where nature has denied these talents, it is in vain to imagine that the defect can ever be supplied by art. Whereas the principal scope for the exertions of art and education is in what regards language, composition and arrangement. It is principally in what regards the thought, that we may say universally, whatever be the species of eloquence a man aims to attain, every thing that serves to improve his knowledge, discernment and good sense, serves also to improve him as an orator. "Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons."

LECTURE III.

Of the Expression.

IN my last lecture, I treated in general of the thought or sentiment of the discourse, and laid before you some reflections on the different sorts into which it is distinguishable, narration, explanation, argumentation and moral reflection, and the methods whereby each ought to be conducted by the Christian orator. I proceed now to consider what may properly be called the expression of the sentiments by language. By this word I here mean, all that regards the enunciation of the thoughts by language. It is by this, as I had occasion in a former discourse to remark to you, that eloquence holds of grammar, as it is by the other, that she holds of logic.

A few words therefore on what I may call the grammatical expression, before I enter on the consideration of the rhetorical. The work of the grammarian serves as a foundation to that of the rhetorician. The highest aim of the former is the lowest aim of the latter. The one seeks only purity, the other superadds elegance and energy. Grammatical purity in any language (suppose English, that in which every preacher in this country is chiefly interested) requires a careful observance of these three things; first, that the words employed be English words; secondly, that they be construed in the English idiom; thirdly, that they be made to present to the reader or hearer the precise meaning, which good use hath affixed to them. A trespass against the first, when the word is not English, is called a barbarism; a trespass against the second, when the fault lies in the construction, is termed a solecism; a trespass against the third, when the word, though English, is not used in its true meaning, is denominated an impropriety. As the foundation is necessary to the superstructure, so an attention to grammatical purity is previously necessary to one who would attain the elegant, affecting, and energetic expression of the orator. Permit me, therefore, to take this opportunity of recommending to you, to bestow some time and attention on the perusal of our best English grammars, and to familiarize yourselves to the idiom of our best and purest writers. It is, I think, a matter of some consequence, and therefore ought not to be altogether neglected by the student.

I know it will be said, that when all a man's labour is employed in instructing the people of a country parish, to which there is little

or no resort of strangers, propriety of expression is not a matter of mighty moment, provided he speak in such a manner as to be intelligible to his parishioners. I admit the truth of what is advanced in this objection, but by no means the consequence which the objectors seem disposed to draw from it. I must therefore entreat that a few things may be considered on the other hand. And first, you cannot know for certain, where it may please Providence that your lot should be. If you acquire the knowledge of the language in the proper acceptation of the word, you acquire a dialect which will make you understood wherever the language is spoken; for as the English translation of the Bible, and as all our best writings, are in what I may call the general and pure idiom of the tongue, that idiom is perfectly well understood even by those, who do not speak with propriety themselves. Whereas if you neglect grammatical accuracy, it is a hundred to one, that many of your words and phrases will be misunderstood in the very neighbouring district or county. And even though they should be intelligible enough, they have a coarseness and vulgarity in them, that cannot fail to make them appear to men of knowledge and taste ridiculous: and this doth inexpressible injury to the thought conveyed under them, how just and important soever it be. You will say, that this is all the effect of mere prejudice in the hearers, consequently unreasonable and not to be regarded. Be it, that this is prejudice in the hearers, and therefore unreasonable. It doth not follow, that the speaker ought to pay no regard to it. It is the business of the orator to accommodate himself to men, such as he sees they are, and not such as he imagines they should be. A certain pliancy of disposition in regard to innocent prejudices and defects, is what in our intercourse with the world, good sense necessarily requires of us, candour requires of us, our religion itself requires of us. It is this very disposition, which our great apostle recommends by his own example, where he tells us that he "became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." But upon impartial examination, the thing perhaps will be found not so unreasonable, as at first sight it may appear. A man of merit and breeding you may disguise by putting him in the apparel of a clown, but you cannot justly find fault, that in that garb he meets not with the same reception in good company, that he would meet with if more suitably habited. The outward appearance is the first thing that strikes us in a person, the expression is the first thing that strikes us in a

discourse. Take care at least, that in neither, there be any thing to make an unfavourable impression, which may preclude all further inquiry and regard. It was extremely well said by a very popular preacher in our own days, who when consulted by a friend that had a mind to publish, whether he thought it befitting a writer on religion to attend to such little matters as grammatical correctness, answered, "By all means. It is much better to write so as to make a critic turn Christian, than so as to make a Christian turn critic." The answer was judicious and well expressed. That the thought may enter deeply into the mind of the reader or hearer, there is need of all the assistance possible from the expression. Little progress can it be expected then, that the former shall make, if there be any thing in the latter, which serves to divert the attention from it. And this effect at least of diverting the attention, even mere grammatic blunders, with those who are capable of discerning them, are but too apt to produce. The more immediate object with us is rhetorical, not grammatical expression, and only that kind of the former which is specially adapted to the Christian oratory. For though there be not perhaps any qualities requisite here, which may not with good effect be employed by those whose province it is to harangue from the bar or in the senate, and though there be very few of the qualities of elocution, which may not on some occasions, with great propriety, be employed from the pulpit; yet some of them, without all question, are more essential to one species of oratory than to another, and it is such as are most adapted to the discourses with which we are here concerned, that I propose now particularly to consider. Before all things then, in my judgment, the preacher ought to make it his study that the style of his discourses be both perspicuous and affecting. I shall make a few observations to illustrate each of these particulars, and then conclude this lecture.

First I say, his style ought to be *perspicuous*. Though it is indeed a most certain fact, that perspicuity is of the utmost consequence to every orator (for what valuable end can any oration answer, which is not understood?) this quality doubtless ought to be more a study to the Christian orator than to any other whatever. The reason is obvious. The more we are in danger of violating any rule (especially if it be a rule of the last importance,) the more circumspection we ought to employ in order to avoid that danger. Now that the preacher must be in much greater danger in this respect than any other public speaker, is manifest from the mixed character at best, often from the very low character in respect of acquired

knowledge, of the audience to whom his speech is addressed. Perspicuity is in a great measure a relative quality. A speech may be perspicuous to one, which to another is unintelligible. It is possible indeed to be obscure in pleading before the most learned and discerning judges, because the pleader's style may be remarkably perplexed and intricate; but without any perplexity or intricacy of style, it is even more than possible, that a man of reading and education shall speak obscurely when he addresses himself in a set discourse to simple and illiterate people. There is a cause of darkness in this case, totally independent of the grammatical structure of the sentences, and the general character of the style. It is, besides, of all causes of obscurity, that which is most apt to escape the notice of a speaker. Nothing is more natural than for a man to imagine, that what is intelligible to him is so to every body, or at least that he speaks with sufficient clearness, when he uses the same language and in equal plainness, with that in which he hath studied the subject, and been accustomed to read. But however safe this rule of judging may be in the barrister and the senator, who generally address their discourses to men of similar education with themselves, and of equal or nearly equal abilities and learning, it is by no means a proper rule for the preacher, one destined to be in spiritual matters a guide to the blind, a light to them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes. Therefore, besides the ordinary rules of perspicuity in respect of diction, which in common with every other public speaker he ought to attend to, he must advert to this in particular, that the terms and phrases he employs in his discourse be not beyond the reach of the inferior ranks of people. Otherwise his preaching is, to the bulk of his audience, but beating the air; whatever the discourse may be in itself, the speaker is to them no better than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It is reported of Archbishop Tillotson, that he was wont, before preaching his sermons, to read them privately to an illiterate old woman of plain sense, who lived in the house with him, and wherever he found he had employed any word or expression, that she did not understand, he instantly erased it, and substituted a plainer in its place, till he brought the style down to her level. The story is much to the prelate's honour; for however incompetent such judges might be of the composition, the doctrine, or the argument, they are certainly the most competent judges of what terms and phrases fall within the apprehension of the vulgar, the class to which they belong. But though such an expedient

would not answer in every situation, we ought at least to supply the want of it by making it more an object of attention than is commonly done, to discover what in point of language falls within and what without the sphere of the common people.

Before I dismiss this article of perspicuity, I shall mention briefly a few of those faults by which it is most commonly transgressed.

The first is pedantry, or an ostentation of learning, by frequent recourse to those words and phrases which are called technical, and which are in use only among the learned. This may justly be denominated the worst kind of obscurity, because it is always an intentional obscurity. In other cases a man may speak obscurely, without knowing it; he may on some subjects speak obscurely, and though he suspects it, may not have it in his power to remedy it; but the pedant affects obscurity. He is dark of purpose, that you may think him deep. The character of a profound scholar is his primary object. Commonly indeed he overshoots the mark, and with all persons of discernment loses this character by his excessive solicitude to acquire it. The pedant in literature is perfectly analogous to the hypocrite in religion. As appearance and not reality is the great study of each, both in mere exteriors far outdo the truly learned and the pious, with whom the reputation of learning and piety is but a secondary object at the most. The shallowness however of such pretenders rarely escapes the discovery of the judicious. But if falsehood and vanity are justly accounted mean and despicable, wherever they are found; when they dare to show themselves in the pulpit, a place consecrated to truth and purity, they must appear to every ingenuous mind perfectly detestable. It must be owned, however, that the pedantic style is not now so prevalent in preaching, as it hath been in former times, and therefore needs not to be further enlarged on. There is indeed a sort of literary diction, which sometimes the inexperienced are ready to fall into insensibly, from their having been much more accustomed to the school and to the closet, to the works of some particular schemer in philosophy, than to the scenes of real life and conversation. This fault, though akin to the former, is not so bad, as it may be without affectation, and when there is no special design of catching applause. It is, indeed, most commonly the consequence of an immoderate attachment to some one or other of the various systems of ethics or theology that have in modern times been published, and obtained a vogue among their respective partizans. Thus the zealous disciple

of Shaftesbury, Akenside and Hutcheson, is no sooner licensed to preach the gospel, than with the best intentions in the world, he harangues the people from the pulpit on the moral sense and universal benevolence—he sets them to inquire whether there be a perfect conformity in their affections to the supreme symmetry established in the universe—he is full of the sublime and beautiful in things, the moral objects of right and wrong, and the proportionable affection of a rational creature towards them. He speaks much of the inward music of the mind, the harmony and the dissonance of the passions, and seems, by his way of talking, to imagine, that if a man have this same moral sense, which he considers as the mental ear, in due perfection, he may tune his soul with as much ease as a musician tunes a musical instrument. The disciple of Doctor Clarke, on the contrary, talks to us in somewhat of a soberer strain, and less pompous phrase, but not a jot more edifying, about unalterable reason and the eternal fitness of things—about the conformity of our actions to their immutable relations and essential differences. All the various sects or parties in religion have been often accused of using a peculiar dialect of their own, when speaking on religious subjects, which though familiar to the votaries of the party, appears extremely uncouth to others. The charge, I am sensible, is not without foundation, though all parties are not in this respect equally guilty. We see, however, that the different systems of philosophy, especially that branch which comes under the denomination of pneumatology, are equally liable to this imputation with systems of theology. I would not be understood, from any thing I have said, to condemn in the gross either the books or systems alluded to. They have their excellencies as well as their blemishes; and as to many of the points in which they seem to differ from one another, I am satisfied that the difference is, like some of our theological disputes, more verbal than real. Let us read even on opposite sides, but still so as to preserve the freedom of our judgment in comparing, weighing and deciding, so that we can with justice apply to ourselves, in regard to all human teachers, the declaration of the poet,

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.*

And even in some cases, wherein we approve the thought in any of those authors, it may not be proper to adopt the language. The adage, which enjoins us to think with the learned, but speak with

* Sworn to no master.

the vulgar, is not to be understood as enjoining us to dissemble; but not to make a useless parade of learning, particularly to avoid every thing in point of language which would put the sentiments we mean to convey beyond the reach of those with whom we converse. It was but just now admitted, that the different sects or denominations of Christians had their several and peculiar dialects. I would advise the young divine, in forming his style in sacred matters, to avoid as much as possible the peculiarities of each. The language of holy scripture and of common sense affords him a sufficient standard. And with regard to the distinguishing phrases, which our factions in religion have introduced, though these sometimes may appear to superficial people and half thinkers sufficiently perspicuous, the appearance is a mere illusion. The generality of men, little accustomed to reflection, are so constituted, that what their ears have been long familiarized to, however obscure in itself, or unmeaning it be, seems perfectly plain to them. They are well acquainted with the terms, expressions and customary application, and they look no farther. A great deal of the learning in divinity of such of our common people as think themselves, and are sometimes thought by others, wonderful scholars, is of this sort. It is generally the fruit of much application, strong memory and weak judgment, and consisting mostly of mere words and phrases, is of that kind of knowledge which puffeth up, gendereth self-conceit, that species of it in particular known by the name of spiritual pride, captiousness, censoriousness, jealousy, malignity, but by no means ministereth to the edifying of the hearers in love. This sort of knowledge I denominate learned ignorance, of all sorts of ignorance the most difficult to be surmounted, agreeably to the observation of Solomon, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him." Would you avoid then feeding the vanity of your hearers, supplying them with words instead of sense, amusing them with curious questions and verbal controversies, instead of furnishing them with useful and practical instruction, detach yourselves from the artificial, ostentatious phraseology of every scholastic, or system builder in theology, and keep as close as possible to the pure style of holy writ, which the apostle calls "the sincere or unadulterated milk of the word." The things, which the Holy Spirit hath taught by the prophets and apostles, give not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Spirit teacheth, a much more natural and suitable language. But be particularly attentive that the scripture

expressions employed be both plain and apposite. The word of God itself may be, and often is handled unskilfully. Would the preacher carefully avoid this charge, let him first be sure that he hath himself a distinct meaning to every thing he advanceth, and next examine, whether the expression he intends to use be a clear and adequate enunciation of that meaning. For if it is true, that a speaker is sometimes not understood, because he doth not express his meaning with sufficient clearness, it is also true that sometimes he is not understood, because he hath no meaning to express.

The last advice I would give on the head of perspicuity is, in composing, to aim at a certain simplicity in the structure of your sentences, avoiding long, intricate and complex periods. Remember always that the bulk of the people are unused to reading and study. They lose sight of the connection in very long sentences, and they are quite bewildered, when, for the sake of rounding a period, and suspending the sense till the concluding clause, you transgress the customary arrangement of the words. The nearer therefore your diction comes to the language of conversation, it will be the more familiar to them, and so the more easily apprehended. In this too the style of scripture is an excellent model. So much for perspicuity.

The next quality I mentioned in the style, was, that it be *affecting*. Though this has more particularly a place in those discourses, which admit and even require a good deal of the pathetic, yet, in a certain degree, it ought to accompany every thing that comes from the pulpit. All from that quarter is conceived to be, mediately or immediately, connected with the most important interests of mankind. This gives a propriety to the affecting manner in a certain degree, whatever be the particular subject. It is this quality in preaching, to which the French critics have given the name of *onction*, and which they explain to be, an affecting sweetness of manner which engages the heart. It is indeed that warmth, and gentle emotion in the address and language, which serves to show, that the speaker is much in earnest in what he says, and is actuated to say it from the tenderest concern for the welfare of his hearers. As this character, however, can be considered only as a degree of that which comes under the general denomination of pathetic, we shall have occasion to consider it more fully afterwards. It is enough here to observe, that as the general strain of pulpit expression ought to be seasoned with this quality, this doth necessarily imply, that the language be ever grave and serious. The necessity of this re-

sults from the consideration of the very momentous effect which preaching was intended to produce ; as the necessity of perspicuity, the first quality mentioned, results from the consideration of the character sustained by the hearers. That the effect designed by this institution, namely the reformation of mankind, requires a certain seriousness, which though occasionally requisite in other public speakers, ought uniformly to be preserved by the preacher, is a truth that will scarcely be doubted by any person who reflects. This may be said in some respect to narrow his compass in persuasion, as it will not permit the same free recourse to humour, wit and ridicule, which often prove powerful auxiliaries to other orators at the bar and in the senate, agreeably to the observation of the poet,

Ridiculum acri

*Fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res.**

At the same time, I am very sensible that an air of ridicule in disproving or dissuading, by rendering opinions or practices contemptible, hath been attempted with approbation by preachers of great name. I can only say that when the contemptuous manner is employed (which ought to be very seldom) it requires to be managed with the greatest delicacy. For time and place and occupation seem all incompatible with the levity of ridicule ; they render jesting impertinence, and laughter madness. Therefore any thing from the pulpit, which might provoke this emotion, would now be justly deemed an unpardonable offence against both piety and decorum. In order, however, to prevent mistakes, permit me here, in passing, to make a remark that may be called a digression, as it immediately concerns my own province only. The remark is, that in these prelections, I do not consider myself as limited by the laws of preaching. There is a difference between a school, even a theological school and a church, a professor's chair and a pulpit ; there is a difference between graduates in philosophy and the arts, and a common congregation. And though in some things, not in all, there be a coincidence in the subject, yet the object is different. In the former, it is purely the information of the hearers, in the latter, it is ultimately their reformation. I shall not therefore hesitate, in this place, to borrow aid from whatever may serve innocently to illustrate, enliven or enforce any part of my subject, and keep

* Ridicule often decides important matters more readily than acute reasoning.

awake the attention of my hearers, which is but too apt to flag at hearing the most rational discourse, if there be nothing it, which can either move the passions, or please the imagination. The nature of my department excludes almost every thing of the former kind, or what may be called pathetic. A little of the *onction* above explained is the utmost that here ought to be aspired to. There is the less need to dispense with what of the latter kind may be helpful for rousing attention. I hope, therefore, to be indulged the liberty, a liberty which I shall use very sparingly, of availing myself of the plea of the satirist,

Ridentem dicere verum
Quid vetat?

So much for the perspicuous and the affecting manner, qualities in the style which ought particularly to predominate in all discourses from the pulpit. There are other graces of elocution, which may occasionally find a place there, such as the nervous, the elegant, and some others; but the former ought never to be wanting. The former therefore are characteristic qualities. The latter are so far from being such, that sometimes they are rather of an opposite tendency. The nervous style requires a conciseness, that is often unfriendly to that perfect perspicuity which ought to predominate in all that is addressed to the Christian people, and which leads a speaker rather to be diffuse in his expression, that he may the better adapt himself to ordinary capacities. Elegance too demands a certain polish, that is not always entirely compatible with that artless simplicity, with which, when the great truths of religion are adorned, they appear always to the most advantage, and in the truest majesty. They are "when unadorn'd, adorn'd the most."

We have now done with what regards in general the sentiment and the elocution. The next lecture shall be on the pronunciation.

* Why may not a laughing man speak the truth?

LECTURE IV.

Of Pronunciation.

I HAVE in the two preceding discourses finished what regards in general the sentiments and the elocution proper for the pulpit. I intend in the present discourse to discuss the article of pronunciation. This admits the same division, which was observed in the former branch, into grammatical* and rhetorical. The former was by the Greeks denominated *εμφωνησις*, the latter *ῥητορικησις*. As it is of the utmost consequence, when we are entering on the examination of any article, that we form precise ideas of the subject of inquiry, and do not confound things in themselves distinct, I shall begin this lecture with a definition of each of these, to which I must beg leave to entreat your attention, that so none may be at a loss about the meaning or application of what shall be advanced in the sequel. As to the first, then, *grammatical pronunciation* consisteth in articulating, audibly and distinctly, the letters, whether vowels or consonants, assigning to each its appropriated sound, in giving the several syllables their just quantity, and in placing the accent, or, as some call it, the syllabic emphasis, in every word on the proper syllable. As to the second, *rhetorical pronunciation* consisteth in giving such an utterance to the several words in a sentence, as shows in the mind of the speaker a strong perception, or as it were feeling of the truth and justness of the thought conveyed by them, and in placing the rhetorical emphasis in every sentence, on the proper word, that is, on that word which, by being pronounced emphatically, gives the greatest energy and clearness to the expression. Under this head is also comprehended *gesture*; as both imply a kind of natural expression, superadded to that conveyed by artificial signs, or the words of the language. Under the term *gesture*, I would be understood to comprehend not only the action of the eyes and other features of the countenance, but also that which results from the motion of the hands and carriage of the body. This together with the proper management of the voice was all comprised under the Greek word *ῥητορικησις*, borrowed from the theatre, but which, for want of a term of equal extent in our language, we are forced to include under the name pronunciation. Now these two kinds of pronunciation, the grammatical and the rhetorical, are so

* Instead of the word *grammatical* in reference to pronunciation, the word *correct* is now more commonly employed. Ed.

perfectly distinct, that each may be found in a very eminent degree without the other. The first indeed is merely an effect of education; insomuch that one who has had the good fortune to be brought up in a place where the language is spoken in purity, and has been taught to read by a sufficient teacher, must inevitably, if he labours under no natural defect in the organs of speech, be master of grammatical pronunciation. The second is more properly, in its origin, the production of nature, but is capable of being considerably improved and polished by education. The natural qualities which combine in producing it, are an exquisite sensibility joined with a good ear and a flexible voice. An Englishman, who hath been properly educated, and always in good company, as the phrase is, that is, in the company of those who, by a kind of tacit consent, are allowed to take the lead in language, may pronounce so as to defy the censure of the most critical grammarian, and yet be, in the judgment of the rhetorician, a most languid and inanimate speaker, one who knows nothing at all of the oratorical pronunciation. Speakers you will often find in the house of commons, who are perfect in the one and totally deficient in the other. On the other hand, you will find speakers of this country who, in respect of the last, have considerable talents, insomuch that they can excite and fix attention, that they can both please and move, that their voice seems capable alike of being modulated to sooth the passions or to inflame them, yet in whose pronunciation a grammarian may discover innumerable defects. There is this difference, however, between the two cases, that though the grammatical pronunciation may be perfect in its kind without the rhetorical, the last is never in perfection without the first. The art of the grammarian in this, as in the former article of expression, serves as a foundation to that of the orator. It will be proper therefore to begin with a few remarks upon the former.

That a right grammatical pronunciation will deserve some regard from us, appears from the same reasons, which evince that grammatical expression deserves some regard. Those reasons therefore shall not be now repeated. There is, however, it must be acknowledged, a considerable difference between the two cases. And the former attempt is much more hazardous than the latter. If we aim no higher, than that the words we use, the application and the construction be proper English, (which is all that grammatical expression requires) we shall never run the risk of the charge of affectation, than which, I know no imputation that is more preju-

dicial to the orator. Whereas a forced and unnatural, because unaccustomed pronunciation, and the awkward mouthing which the attempt often occasions, as it falls within the observation of the generality of hearers, so it is more disgusting to hearers of taste and discernment, than perhaps any provincial accent whatsoever. Shall we then give up all attempts this way? I do not say that neither. But let us keep a proper medium in our attempts, and never strain beyond what we can effect with ease. Let us begin by avoiding the most faulty pronunciations we can discover in ourselves, or which have been remarked to us by others; and let us endeavour to avoid them not in the pulpit only, but in common conversation. It would be a matter of considerable consequence for this as well as for more material purposes, that young men of an ingenuous temper and good sense, who happen to be companions, should mutually agree to serve as checks and monitors to one another. I know not any thing which would contribute more to prevent the contracting of ungainly habits, or to correct them timely when contracted. "A friend's eye," says the proverb, "is a good mirror." And every one must be sensible, that there are several kinds of faults and improprieties, which totally elude the discovery of the person chargeable with them, but which by no means escape the notice of the attentive spectator or auditor. I said that when a faulty manner in pronouncing is discovered, it ought to be avoided not in the pulpit only, but in conversation. The nearer our manner of pronouncing in the pulpit is to that we daily use, the more easy and the more natural it will appear. Example, as in every thing, so here in particular, goes a great way. Let us therefore attend to the manner of the best speakers, to whose company we have access, and we shall insensibly conform ourselves to it. It is by such insensible, more than by any intentional imitation, that every man acquires the speech and pronunciation which he uses. And by the like easy and gradual influence of example, by which a faulty pronunciation was contracted, it will best be cured. The only caution necessary on this article is, that we be very sure as to the choice we make of patterns, lest unluckily we imitate blemishes for excellencies, and be at great pains in acquiring, what we ought rather to be at pains to avoid. Grammars and dictionaries may be of some use here, but are not sufficient without other aid. Distinctions only discernible by the ear, can never be adequately conveyed merely by the eye. There is one part of pronunciation, however, and a very important part, which may be learnt solely

by book, that is, the placing of the accent or syllabic emphasis. So much for grammatical pronunciation.

As to the *rhetorical pronunciation*, there is not any thing so peculiar in the Christian eloquence, as to require that we make any addition of moment to the rules on this subject laid down in the best institutes of rhetoric, which I recommend to your serious perusal. I shall only remark to you a few of the chief and most common faults in this way, observable in preachers, and suggest some hints, by a due attention to which, one may attain the right management of the voice, and be enabled to avoid those faults. The first I shall observe, though not in itself a very great, yet is a very common fault, and often proves the source of several others; it is the *straining of the voice* beyond its natural key, commonly the effect of a laudable desire to make one's self be heard in a large congregation. This, however, is one of those expedients, that rarely fail to defeat the purpose which occasioned them. What is thus spoken in a forced tone (though the note in the musical scale emitted by the voice be higher) is neither so distinct, nor so audible, as what is spoken in the natural tone of voice. There is a very great difference between speaking high, and speaking loud; though these two are often confounded. Women's voices are a full octave higher or shriller (for that is all the term means) than men's, and yet they are much less fitted for being heard in a large auditory. In a chime or music bells the bass notes are all struck on the biggest bells, and the treble notes on the smallest. Accordingly the former are heard at a distance, which the feeble sound of the other cannot reach. The same thing may be observed of the pipes in an organ. Besides, it is a much greater stress to the speaker, to hold out with his voice raised ever so little above its natural pitch, and it lays him under several disadvantages in respect of pronunciation, of which I shall have occasion to take notice afterwards.

A second fault which is very common with preachers is too great *rapidity of utterance*. This is an ordinary, though not a necessary consequence of committing a discourse to memory and repeating it. A person, without particularly guarding against it, is apt to contract an impatience to deliver the words, as fast as they occur to his mind, that so he may give them to the audience, whilst he is sure he can do it. This also is a great hinderance to the attainment of an affecting or energetic pronunciation; besides that it greatly fatigues the attention of the hearer, whom, after all, many things must escape, which otherwise he might have retained.

A third fault I shall observe is a *theatrical and too violent manner*. This, though it seems to proceed from a commendable ardour, sins against propriety in many ways. It suits not the gravity of the subject; and to appear destitute of all command of one's self doth not befit one who would teach others to obtain a perfect mastery over their passions. The preacher's manner in general ought to be modest, at the same time earnest and affecting.

A fourth fault, which is indeed the opposite extreme to that now mentioned, is an *insipid monotony*, by which every thing that is said, whether narration, explanation, argumentation or address to the passions, is uniformly and successively articulated in the same listless, lifeless manner. And this is a much greater fault than the preceding. The former offends only hearers of taste and reflection, but the latter, all who can either understand or feel. The preacher, in such a case, exhibits the appearance of a school boy who repeats a lesson he hath conned over, but who doth not form a single idea of what he is saying from beginning to end.

The fifth, and only other remarkable fault in pronunciation I shall mention, is a *sing-song manner*; or what we commonly call a cant, which is something like a measure of a tune, that the preacher unintermittedly runs over, 'till he conclude his discourse. This, as a kind of relief to the lungs, is what a strained voice (the fault in speaking first mentioned) when it becomes habitual, generally terminates in, and though it hath not the same air of indifference with the monotony, is in other respects liable to the same objections. It marks no difference in the nature of the things said, and consequently (though the tune itself were not unpleasant) it may prove a lullaby, and dispose the hearers to sleep, but is quite unfit for awakening their attention. Both the last mentioned faults are the too frequent (not the unavoidable) consequence of the common method of rehearsing a discourse by rote, which has been verbatim committed to memory. This very naturally leads the speaker to fix the closest attention on the series of the words prepared, that he may not lose the thread. And this as naturally carries off his attention entirely from the thought.

The consideration of these things hath often led me to doubt, which of the two methods of delivery, reading or repeating, we ought to recommend to students, or at least which of the two, if universal, would probably have the best effect, and be attended with fewest disadvantages. I shall candidly lay before you, what hath occurred to my thoughts on this subject, and leave it to every one's

own judgment to decide for himself. That a discourse well spoken hath a stronger effect than one well read, will hardly bear a question. From this manifest truth I very early concluded, and was long of the opinion, that the way of reading sermons should be absolutely banished from the pulpit. But from farther experience, I am now disposed to suspect, that this conclusion was rather hasty. Though by proper culture the powers of oratory may be very much improved, yet by no culture whatever will these powers be created, where nature hath denied them. A certain original and natural talent or genius for art to work upon, is as necessary in the orator, as in the poet. Now if all, who have the ministry in view, were possest of this natural talent, the conclusion we mentioned would certainly be just. But so far is this from being the case, that experience plainly teacheth us, it is the portion of very few. But though there be not many, who will ever arrive at the pathos, the irresistible force of argument and the sublimity, in which the glory of eloquence consists, there are not a few who by a proper application of their time and study, will be capable of composing justly, of expressing themselves not only with perspicuity, but with energy, and of reading. I say not in a proper and inoffensive, but even in an affecting manner. So much more common are the talents necessary for the one accomplishment, than those requisite for the other. I have indeed heard this point controverted, and people maintain, that it was as easy to acquire the talent of repeating with energy and propriety, as of reading. But I could hardly ever think them serious who said so, or at least that they had duly examined the subject. There are, no doubt, degrees of excellence in reading, as well as in repeating, and they are but few, that attain to the highest degree in either. But in what may be regarded as good in its kind, though not the best—I speak within bounds, when I say, that I have found six good readers, for one who repeated tolerably. As to my personal experience I shall frankly tell you, what I know to be fact. I have tried both ways; I continued long in the practice of repeating, and was even thought (if people did not very much deceive me) to succeed in it; but I am so absolutely certain, that I can give more energy, and preserve the attention of the hearers better, to what I read than ever it was in my power to do to what I repeated. Nor is it any wonder. There are difficulties to be surmounted in the latter case, which have no place at all in the former. The talents in other respects are the same, that fit one to excel in either way. Now as it will, I believe, be admitted by every body who re-

flects, that a discourse well read is much better than one ill spoken, I should not think it prudent to establish any general rule, which would probably make bad speakers of many, who might otherwise have proved good readers. There is something in charging one's memory with a long chain of words and syllables, and this is one of the difficulties I hinted at, and then running on, as it were, mechanically in the same train, the preceding word associating and drawing in the subsequent, that seems by taking off a man's attention from the thought to the expression, to render him insusceptible of the delicate sensibility as to the thought, which is the true spring of rhetorical pronunciation. That this is not invariably the effect of getting by heart, the success of some actors on the stage is an undeniable proof. But the comparative facility, arising from the much greater brevity of their speeches, and from the relief and emotion that is given to the player by the action of the other dialogists in the scene, makes the greatest difference imaginable in the two cases. A man, through habit, becomes so perfectly master of a speech of thirty or forty lines, which will not take him three minutes to repeat, that he hath no anxiety about recollecting the words: his whole attention is to the sentiment. The case must be very different, when the memory is charged with a discourse which will take thirty minutes to deliver.

Besides, it must be observed, there is a great difference between speaking an oration and repeating it. In the former case, the orator may by premeditation have made himself master of the argument; he may have arranged his matter in his own mind, but as to the expression, trusts to that fluency and command of language which by application and practice have become habitual to him. It is impossible, that any speech on any motion in the house of commons, except the first speech, should be gotten by heart. For every following one, if pertinent, must necessarily have a reference to what was said on the argument before. In like manner it is only the first pleading in a cause at the bar, which can have the advantage of such preparation. Whether those, who open the cause or question, always avail themselves of this power, and previously commit to memory every sentence they utter, I know not. But we do not find, that these speeches have generally a remarkable superiority in point of elocution, over those which follow, as it is certain, they can have no superiority at all in point of pronunciation. Several of Cicero's best orations were on the defensive side, and therefore could not have been composed verbatim before

they were spoken. And the most celebrated oration of Demosthenes, that which at the time had the most wonderful effect upon his auditory, and raised to the highest pitch the reputation of the speaker, the oration *περὶ στεφάνου*, (for the crown) was an answer to Æschines's accusation; and such an answer as it was absolutely impossible should have been; either in words or method, prepared before hearing his adversary: So close is the respect it has, not only to the sentiments, but to the very expressions that had been used against him. And the two parties were at the time such rivals and enemies as to exclude the most distant suspicion of concert. It deserves our notice, that instances of all the faults in pronunciation above enumerated, except the last, are to be found both in the senate and at the bar; particularly the two extremes of violence and monotony. And these are easily accounted for. The one is a common consequence of strong passions, where there is neither the taste nor the judgment that is necessary for managing them. The other generally prevails where there is a total want both of taste and of feeling. It is remarkable, that the only other fault mentioned, the canting pronunciation, is hardly ever found but in the pulpit. Nay, what would at first appear incredible, I have known ministers whose sing-song manner in preaching was a perfect soporific to the audience, pronounce their speeches in the general assembly with great propriety and energy. The only account I can make of this difference is, that in the two former cases, in the senate and at the bar, the speeches are almost always spoken. Committing the whole, word for word, to memory, is, I believe, very rarely attempted. Now the general assembly partakes of the nature both of a senate and court of judicature. Sermons, on the contrary, are more generally repeated. They are very few who trust to a talent of speaking extempore in the pulpit. Now when once the attention, as was hinted already, loses hold of the thought, and is wholly occupied in tracing the series of the words, the speaker insensibly, to relieve himself from the difficulty of keeping up his voice at the same stretch, falls into a kind of tune, which, without any regard to the sense of what is said, returns as regularly, as if it were played on an instrument. One thing further may be urged in favour of reading, and it is of some consequence, that it always requires some preparation. A discourse must be written before it can be read. When a man who does not read, gets over, through custom, all apprehension about the opinion of his hearers, or re-

spect for their judgment, there is some danger, that laziness may prompt him to speak without any preparation, and consequently to become careless what he says. But to return, the sum of what has been offered, is not that reading a discourse is universally preferable to repeating it. By no means. But only that if the latter way admits of higher excellence, the former is more attainable and less hazardous.*

It is to be regretted that the training of young men, who are intended for public speakers, to read and speak properly and gracefully is so much and so universally neglected in latter times. The ancients both of Greece and of Rome, sensible of the importance of this article in educating their youth for the forum and for the senate, were remarkably attentive to it; and it must be owned their success in this way was correspondent to their care. For however much we moderns appear to have surpassed them in some, and equalled them perhaps in all other arts, our inferiority in regard to eloquence will hardly bear a dispute. It is not possible, however, that so great a defect in modern education should be supplied by a few cursory directions, which is all that your leisure and

* It will be observed that in this paragraph and the preceding, the author is discussing the question, whether it is better for ministers to read their sermons in the pulpit or to deliver them from memory. To the opinion which he has expressed, it is presumed there must be a general assent. In addition to his reasons against repeating sermons from memory, it is worthy of remark that this method of preaching would require an entirely disproportionate share of time from ministers in general; not to say, that the mental exhaustion consequent upon it, could not well be sustained year after year.

There is another mode of preaching to which Dr. Campbell makes scarcely any reference; and respecting which it is perhaps to be regretted that he did not express an opinion. That his opinion respecting it would have been favourable may be conjectured from his remark in the last paragraph: 'I have known ministers whose sing-song manner in preaching was a perfect soporific to the audience, pronounce their speeches in the general assembly with great propriety and energy.' He accounts for this difference in the manner of pronunciation by the circumstance, that in the general assembly the speeches are spoken as in the senate and at the bar. Now if those ministers of whose manner in preaching he complains, had prepared themselves for preaching in the same manner as they prepared for speaking in the general assembly, why might they not have acquitted themselves with similar propriety and energy? What then is the preparation for speaking in the general assembly, at the bar, and in the senate? Not indeed by committing to memory word for word a discourse carefully composed, nor yet by carefully writing a speech with the expectation of reading it; but by acquiring an intimate acquaintance with a given subject, by making it familiar

the prosecution of the other and still more important branches of my plan will here give scope for. To attain a mastery in the art of speaking would require much study improved by exercise and corrected by conversation. But though we cannot do all that we would, let us not for this think ourselves excused from doing what we can.

The first thing then I would advise the young preacher at his setting out, in regard to the management of his voice, is cautiously to avoid beginning on too high a clef. His natural tone of speaking in conversation is that which will always succeed best with him, in which, if properly managed, he will be best heard, be able to hold out longest, and have most command of his voice in pronouncing. Let it be observed, that in conversing (according as the company is large or small) we can speak louder or softer, without altering the tone. Our aim therefore ought to be, to articulate the words distinctly, and to give such a forcible emission to the breath in pronouncing, as makes the voice reach farther without raising it to a higher key. Every man's voice has naturally a certain compass, above which it cannot rise, and below which it cannot sink. The ordinary tone, on which we converse, is nearly about the middle

to the mind, and by thoroughly engaging in respect to it the whole heart and soul. With such preparation, a man of ordinary self-possession will deliver his sentiments without embarrassment and with effect. Would educated ministers generally adopt such a method, except on subjects requiring peculiar nicety of expression, the mode of preaching without fully written discourses would soon obtain universal respect, and the pulpit would furnish strains of the highest eloquence.

The chief objection to this mode of preaching is, that men who are so frequently required to speak in public as ministers are, would be very much in danger of neglecting the pen, and thus of acquiring habits of inaccuracy in thinking and expression. But this is not a necessary evil. It may be guarded against; and they who adopt this mode ought very frequently to employ their pens in writing essays, parts of sermons, and not unfrequently whole sermons. Nor ought it to be expected, because the manner of preaching recommended in this note has decided advantages as a general manner, that a preacher should never read his sermon whatever be the subject, or that no one should preach who feels after many trials that he ought to have his manuscript before him.

On this subject, it is with much pleasure that I refer the reader to a work by the Rev. Henry Ware, Jr. Professor of Pulpit Eloquence and the Pastoral Care in Harvard University, entitled *Hints on Extemporaneous Preaching*. The third edition of this work has lately been given to the public. It is the most satisfactory work of the kind that can be consulted; and ought by all means to be read in connection with this Lecture. ED.

of that compass. When we make that, therefore, as it were, the keynote of our discourse, we have the power with ease of both elevating and depressing the voice, in uttering particular words, just as the sense requires, that they be uttered emphatically or otherwise. When we recommend the ordinary tone of the voice in conversation, as that on which we ought in public to attempt to speak, we would not be understood to recommend an insipid monotony; we only mean to signify, that this should serve as the foundation note, on which the general tenour of the discourse should run. On the contrary, it being one of the best preservatives against that egregious fault in speaking, by giving the voice the greatest latitude both in rising and falling with facility, is one reason that I so earnestly recommend it. Every body must be sensible, that when the voice is at an unnatural stretch, it can give no emphasis to any word whatever without squeaking; so that the speaker, for the ease of his own lungs, is forced to take refuge, either in a tiresome monotony or a drowsy cant. Besides, it deserves to be remarked, that most men when earnest in conversation on an affecting subject, naturally, without any study, give their voice the proper inflections which the import of what is said requires. When, therefore, we speak in public, if we ourselves enter seriously into the subject, and are as it were interested in it, we shall, without any effort, being taught by nature and assisted by habit, give such an emphasis to the words which require it, and such cadence to the sentences, as in conversing on serious and moving subjects we never fail to employ. Whereas, if we speak on a forced key, we cannot have the same assistance either from nature or habit.

A second direction I would give, is to be very careful, in proceeding in your discourse, to preserve in the general tenour of it the same key on which you began. Many, who begin right, insensibly raise their voice as they advance, till at last they come to speak in a tone that is very painful to themselves, and by necessary consequence, grating to their hearers. It will require much care, attention, and even practice, to prevent this evil.

It will not a little contribute to this end, that you diligently observe the following direction, the third I am to give on this subject, which is, that you always begin by speaking very deliberately and rather slowly. Even a drawling pronunciation, in the introduction of a discourse, is more pardonable than a rapid one. Most subjects will require that you grow somewhat quicker as you advance. But of all things be careful to avoid that uniform rapidity of utterance,

which is very unattractive, as having the evident marks of repeating a lesson by rote, which is so great an enemy to all emphasis and distinction in pronouncing, and which, besides, even to the most attentive hearer, throws out the things delivered faster than his mind is able to receive them. The fourth and last direction I shall give, is what was hinted already, frequent practising in reading, speaking and repeating before one sensible companion at the least, or more where they may be had, who should be encouraged to offer with freedom and candour such remarks and censures as have occurred. So much for the general rules of rhetorical pronunciation in preaching. A great deal more might be profitably offered; but where such a multiplicity of subjects demand our attention and a share of our time, a great deal on each must be left to your own application and diligence.

LECTURE V.

Discourses distributed into various kinds, as addressed to the Understanding, the Imagination, the Passions, and the Will.

I PROCEED, in the third place, to inquire into the various kinds of discourses, which the Christian eloquence admits, and the rules in regard to composition, that ought to be followed in each. Before I enter on it, I will take the freedom to digress a little, and give you a brief account of the origin of the plan, that I am going to lay before you, which may be regarded as the outline of an institute of pulpit eloquence. When I was myself a student of divinity in this place, there were about seven or eight of us fellow students, who, as we lived mostly in the town, formed ourselves into a society, the great object of which was our mutual improvement, both in the knowledge of the theory of theology, and also in whatever might be conducive to qualify us for the practical part or duties of the pastoral function. We added to our original number, as we found occasion, from time to time, for our society subsisted a good many years. Several valuable members have already finished the part assigned them by Providence on this stage. As to those who remain, I shall only say, in general, that they are all men of consideration and character in the church. I should not have been so particular, but that I would gladly by the way recommend the prac-

tice of forming such small societies, when it can conveniently be accomplished. I can assure you from my own experience, that when there is a proper choice of persons, an entire confidence in one another, and a real disposition to be mutually useful, it is one of the most powerful means of improvement that I know. Amongst other things discussed in this small society, one was, an inquiry into the nature of sermons and other discourses proper for the pulpit, the different kinds into which they might fitly be distributed, and the rules of composition that suited each. On this subject we had several conversations. When these were over, I had the task assigned me to make out a short sketch or abstract of the whole. This, I the more readily undertook, as it had been, for some time before, a favourite study of mine, having, when qualifying myself for another business, given some attention to the forensic oratory of the ancients, and having afterwards remarked both the analogies and differences between it and the Christian eloquence. Of this abstract, every one who chose it took a copy; and as we had no object but general usefulness, every one was at liberty to communicate it to whom he pleased. I have a copy of this still in my possession, and as in the main I am at present of the same sentiments, I shall freely use it in the lectures I am to give on this subject. At the same time I do not intend servilely to follow it, but shall make such alterations as I shall see cause; for I acknowledge, that further experience hath made me in some particulars change my opinion. Besides suggesting to you the advantages that may redound from such small societies formed among students for mutual improvement, I had another reason for prefacing my prelections on the composition of pulpit discourses with this anecdote, which was, that I might not appear to arrogate more merit than truly belonged to me. To come therefore to the point in hand; it was observed in a former lecture that the word eloquence, in its greatest latitude, denotes that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end. Now all the legitimate ends of speaking, whatever be the subject, you will find, if you attend to it, are reducible to these four. Every speech hath, or ought to have, for its professed aim, either to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will.

The first of these may be subdivided into two others. When a speaker addresseth himself to the understanding, he proposes the instruction of his hearers, and that either by explaining some doctrine unknown or not distinctly comprehended by them, or by

proving some position disbelieved or doubted by them. In other words, he proposeth either to dispel ignorance or to vanquish error. In the one, his aim is their information, in the other, their conviction. Accordingly the predominant quality of the former, is perspicuity, of the latter, argument. By that, we are made to know; by this, to believe.

The name of address to the imagination may seem at first, to some hearers, to convey a notion of too much levity, to be a suitable characteristic of any thing which ought to come from the pulpit. But this is a mere prejudice, arising from an unfavourable sense that is sometimes put upon the word imagination, as opposed to truth and reality. Whereas with us, it only means that faculty of the mind, whereby it is capable of conceiving and combining things together, which in that combination have neither been perceived by the senses, nor are remembered. Now in that acceptance of the word, let it be observed, that all fables, apologues, parables, and allegories, are addressed to the imagination. Poetry, for the most part, both sacred and profane, is an address of this sort; in like manner all prophecy. Indeed in the Jewish idiom poetry and prophecy were synonymous terms. Hence it is, that the apostle Paul speaking of the Cretans, does not scruple to call one of their poets, though a pagan, a prophet of their own. This only by the way, in order to remove any dislike or unfavourable prepossession which may be occasioned by the name.

In regard to preaching, the only subject with which we are at present concerned, the imagination is addressed, by exhibiting to it a lively and beautiful representation of a suitable object. As in this exhibition the task of the orator like that of the painter, consisteth in imitation, the merit of the work results entirely from these two sources, dignity as well in the subject or thing imitated, as in the manner of imitation, and resemblance in the performance or picture. The principal scope for this kind of address is in narration and description, and it attains the summit of perfection in what is called the sublime, or those great and noble images, which, when in suitable colouring presented to the mind, do, as it were, distend the imagination, and delight the soul, as with something superlatively excellent. But it is evident, that to this creative faculty the fancy frequently lends her aid in promoting still nobler ends. From her exuberant stores, most of those tropes and figures are derived, which have such a marvellous efficacy in rousing the passions, and by some secret, sudden and inexplicable association, awaking all the

tenderest emotions of the heart. In that case, the address of the orator is intended not ultimately, to astonish by the loftiness of the images, or to charm by the beauteous resemblance, which the painting bears to nature, nay, it will not permit the hearers even a moment's leisure for making the comparison, but as by some magical spell, hurries them, before they are aware, into love, pity, grief, terror, aversion or desire. It therefore assumes the denomination of pathetic, which is the characteristic of the third species of discourses, that are addressed to the passions.

The fourth and last kind, the most complex of all, which is calculated to influence the will, and persuade to action, as it is in reality an artful mixture of that which proposeth to convince the judgment, and that which interests the passions, its distinguishing excellency results from these two, the argumentative and the pathetic incorporated together. These acting with united force, constitute that vehemence, that warm eviction, that earnest and affecting contention, which is admirably fitted for persuasion, and hath always been regarded as the supreme qualification in an orator. Of the four sorts of discourses now enumerated, it may be observed in general, that each preceding species, in the order above exhibited, is preparatory to the subsequent, that each subsequent species is founded on the preceding, and that thus they ascend in a regular progression. Knowledge, the object of the understanding, furnisheth materials for the fancy; the fancy culls, compounds, and by her mimic art disposes these materials so as to affect the passions; the passions are the natural spurs to volition or action, and so need only to be rightly directed. So much in general for the different kinds of discourses on whatever subject, from the bare consideration of the object addressed, understanding, imagination, passion, will, and those fundamental principles of eloquence in the largest acceptation which result from these. But as the kind addressed to the understanding has been subdivided into two, that which barely explains, and that which proves, I shall henceforth consider them as five in number.

I come now to apply these universal principles to the particular subject, with which we are immediately concerned. It hath been occasionally observed, oftener than once, that the reformation of mankind is the great and ultimate end of the whole ministerial function, and especially of this particular branch, preaching or discoursing from the pulpit. But it is not necessary, that the ultimate end of the whole should be the immediate scope of every part. It

is enough, that the immediate scope of the part be such, that the attainment of it is manifestly a step towards the ultimate end of the whole. In other words, the former ought always to serve as a means for the effecting of the latter. Let us proceed in considering the propriety of particular and immediate ends by this rule.

First then, in order to effect the reformation of men, that is, in order to bring them to a right disposition and practice, there are some things which of necessity they must be made to know. No one will question, that the knowledge of the nature and extent of the duties which they are required to practise, and of the truths and doctrines which serve as motives to practice, is absolutely necessary. The explication of these in the pulpit forms a species of discourses which falls under the first class above mentioned. It is addressed to the understanding, its aim is information, the only obstacle it hath to remove is ignorance. Sermons of this sort we shall henceforth distinguish by the term *explanatory*. Now if knowledge is the first step in religion, faith is certainly the second, for the knowledge of any tenet influenceth our conduct only so far as it is believed. My knowledge of the peculiar doctrines maintained by Mahometans nowise affects my practice. Why? Because I do not believe them. When therefore revelation in general, or any of its fundamental doctrines in particular, are known to be called in question, by a considerable part of the congregation, it is doubtless incumbent on the preacher earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, and consequently it must be a proper subject for the pulpit to defend the cause of religion by refuting the cavils of gainsayers, and publicly evincing the truth. Such defence and confutation form a species of discourses which falls under the second class above mentioned. It is addressed to the understanding, its aim is conviction; the adversaries it encounters are scepticism and error. Discourses of this sort we shall distinguish by the name *controversial*. Both the above sorts, the explanatory and the controversial, as they coincide in the object addressed, the understanding of the hearers, go also under the common name of instructive.

Further, as one way, and indeed a very powerful way, of recommending religion is by example, it must be conducive to the general end of preaching above mentioned, to make it sometimes the business of a sermon, to exhibit properly any known good character, by giving a lively narrative of the person's life, or of any signal period of his life, or of any particular virtue, as illustrated through

the different periods of his life. For performances of this kind the history of our Lord Jesus Christ affords the richest fund of matter. In like manner the lives of the saints recorded in scripture, the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, such at least with which from the accounts given in holy writ we have occasion to be acquainted, make very proper subjects. Add to these, what are called funeral sermons, or merited encomiums on the life and actions of deceased persons, eminent for virtue and piety, whose character is well known to the people addressed. It may not want its use, on the contrary, to delineate sometimes in proper colours the conduct of the vicious. To do justice to the respectable qualities and worthy actions of a good man is to present an audience with an amiable and animated pattern of Christian excellence, which by operating on their admiration and their love, raiseth in their mind a pious emulation. That we are, without attending to it, induced to imitate what we admire and love, will not admit a question. Exhibitions of this kind from the pulpit form a species of discourses which falls under the third class above mentioned. They are addressed to the imagination; and their scope is to promote virtue by insinuation; the view of excellence engages love, love awakes emulation, and that as naturally produces imitation. In order to distinguish such discourses, we shall henceforth denominate them *commendatory*.

Again, when an audience is about to be employed in any solemn office of religion, which, that it may prove edifying to those engaged in it, requires in them a devout, a recollected, and a benevolent disposition of soul, it will doubtless tend to promote the general end, reformation, to make it the immediate scope of the sermon, by working on the affections of the audience, to mould them into a suitable frame. Sermons of this sort fall under the fourth class above mentioned; they are addressed to the passions, and their scope is to beget virtuous and devout habits by conformation. This species of discourses we call *pathetic*. It deserves, however, to be remarked, that the pathos excited by the preacher, ought ever to be accompanied with, and chastened by, piety, submission and charity. At the same time, that it conveys both light and heat to the soul, it is pure and inoffensive; like that wherein God appeared to Moses in the bush which burned, but was not consumed. It is this kind of *pathos* in its lowest degree, which the French devotional writers have distinguished by the name of *onction*, but for which we have not a proper term in English. Mr. Gibbon,

a late celebrated historian, says in one place, after Jortin, that what the French call *onction*, the English call *cant*. This on some occasions may be true; but it is not the constant or even the general meaning of the word. What the English call *cant* in preaching, is no other than a frequent recurrence to certain common words and phrases, with which the people are delighted merely through habit, but which convey no sound instruction whatever. That termed *onction* by the French, is such a manner in the speaker, as convinces the hearers that he is much in earnest, that he speaks from real affections to them, and thereby strongly engages their attention. That *cant* with ignorant hearers may produce an effect somewhat similar, is not to be denied. But the result upon the whole cannot be the same. *Onction* is an excellent vehicle for instruction; but where no instruction is conveyed, the hearer can be rendered neither wiser nor better by mere *cant*; he may be hereby made a greater bigot and a greater fool. The two last kinds of discourses, it must be owned, are near a-kin to each other, and very apt to be confounded. The enemies they combat are indifference and listlessness. If we thought it necessary to observe a scrupulous exactness in distinguishing, we should rather say (for the words are not synonymous) that the enemy of the former is indifference, and of the latter, listlessness. And let me add, these often prove more dangerous adversaries to religion, than others of more hostile appearance and of more formidable names.

Finally, it will not be questioned, that it will frequently be proper to make it the direct design of a discourse to persuade to a good, or to dissuade from a bad life in general, or to engage to the performance of any particular duty, or to an abstinence from any particular sin, and that either from all the arguments, or from any one class of arguments afforded by the light of nature, or by revelation, and adapted to the purpose. Discourses of this sort fall under the fifth and last class above mentioned. They are addressed to the will; their aim is persuasion. The enemies they combat, are irreligion and vice. Such sermons we discriminate by the term *persuasive*.

Let us now, for further illustration of the subject, consider whether the different sorts of discourses from the pulpit above enumerated bear any analogy to the different sorts of orations treated of by ancient rhetoricians. These both Greeks and Romans, after Aristotle, have distributed into three kinds, the judiciary, the demonstrative, and the deliberative. The *judiciary*, is the name by which the Stagyrite has thought fit to distinguish the pleadings of advo-

cates or counsellors, whether in accusation of an adversary, or in defence of a client. As in all such pleadings, and indeed in all litigation whatever, there is something affirmed by one of the litigants, which is denied by the other, so the aim of each is to convince the bench, that his representation is agreeable to truth, and to refute the arguments of his antagonist. The point in dispute is sometimes a question of fact. Did the defendant do, or not do, the action, with which he is charged by the plaintiff? Sometimes it is a question of right. The fact may be undeniable; and the only point in debate, Was it right, wrong, or indifferent? lawful or criminal? Sometimes indeed both points may be contended by the parties. But it doth not belong to us, to enter into these minutiae, or consider the different sources of topics, whence the proof must be derived. Only from what hath been said, it is manifest that this species, from its very nature, is perfectly analogous to the second class of sermons, the controversial. It is directed to the understanding; its aim is conviction; the adversaries it professeth to combat, are doubtfulness and mistake. The *demonstrative*, a name given to those panegyrics or funeral orations, which were sometimes by public authority pronounced in honour of departed patriots and heroes, must from the design of insinuating the love of virtue by exhibiting such examples to their imitation, so exactly and so evidently coincide in form and composition, (however different in regard to matter or subject) to the third class of sermons above mentioned, the commendatory, that I should think it unnecessary to attempt any further illustration of it. Only it may not be amiss to observe here by the way, that to this political expedient among the ancient Greeks and Romans, of paying such public honours to their great men departed, perhaps more than to any other, that love of their country, that contempt of life, and that thirst of military glory, for which they were so remarkable, is to be ascribed. The term *deliberative* is applied to speeches in the senate or in the assembly of the people, whose express aim is to persuade the audience to come to a certain resolution, in regard to their conduct as a commonwealth or state, such as, to declare war, or to make peace, to enter into an alliance, or the contrary. Discourses of this sort must evidently be in many respects very similar to the fifth and last class of sermons above mentioned. They are addressed to the will, their aim is persuasion. The enemies they combat are temerity, imprudence, and other such vices, considered particularly as political evils, as prejudicial to the interest or

honour of the state. Nay, there will be often found a pretty considerable coincidence in the topics, from which the arguments, in both these kinds of persuasives, are commonly drawn. The useful, the honourable, the equitable, are considerations entirely well adapted to each. To the first and fourth kinds of sermons mentioned, there is not found any thing in the institutes of rhetoricians which can be denominated analogous. The first, the explanatory, is indeed, of all kinds, the simplest, and may in respect of form be considered, as bearing a resemblance to the lessons delivered in the schools of the philosophers, in regard to which, no person, as far as I know, has thought it necessary to lay down rules. The fourth kind, the pathetic, hath in point of aim more similarity to the eloquence of the theatre, tragedy in particular, than to that either of the bar or of the senate. But the difference in form arising from the nature of the work, between all dramatic compositions, and the discourses prepared for the pulpit, is so extremely great, that I have not judged it necessary hitherto so much as to name this species of oratory.

And as probably I shall not have occasion in these prelections to mention it hereafter, I shall now take the liberty to give you briefly, in passing, my sentiments concerning theatrical performances, and the use which may be made of them by the Christian orator. As to the drama in general, it is manifestly no more than a particular form, in which a tale or fable is exhibited; and if the tale itself be moral and instructive, it would require no small degree of fanatacism to make one think, that its being digested into so many dialogues, and dressed up in the dramatic form, can render it immoral and pernicious. So much for the question of right, as I may call it. If from this, we proceed to a question of fact, to which the other very naturally gives occasion, and inquire, whether the greater number of modern plays, be such tales as we can really denominate moral and instructive, or on the contrary, such as have a tendency to vitiate the principles and debauch the practice of the spectators; to this point, I acknowledge, it is more difficult to give a satisfactory answer. I own, indeed, that in my judgment the far greater part of our comedies, I say not all, merit the latter character, rather than the former. For not to mention the gross indecencies with which many of them abound, (and to the reproach of our national taste, as well as morals, English comedy perhaps more than any other) what is generally the hero of the piece, but a professed rake or libertine, who is a man of more spirit, forsooth, than to be check-

ed in his pursuits by the restraints of religion, the dictates of conscience, the laws of society, or (which were accounted sacred even among pagans and barbarians) by the rights of hospitality and of private friendship? Such a one, the poet, in order to recommend him to the special favour of the audience, adorns with all the wit and humour and other talents, of which he himself is master, and always crowns with success in the end. Hence it is, that the stage with us may, without any hyperbole, be defined, the school of gallantry and intrigue; in other words, the school of dissoluteness. Here the youth of both sexes may learn to get rid of that troublesome companion Modesty, intended by Providence as a guard to virtue, and a check against licentiousness. Here vice may soon provide herself in a proper stock of effrontery for effectuating her designs, and triumphing over innocence. But besides the evil that too commonly results from the nature and conduct of the fable, there is another, in the tendency to dissipation and idleness, the great enemies of sobriety, industry and reflection, which theatrical amusements ordinarily give to the younger part of the spectators. On the other hand, are there no advantages which may serve as a counterbalance to these evils? There are some advantages; it would not be candid to dissemble them, but they can be no counterbalance. What is just pronunciation, easy motion, and graceful action, compared with virtue? Those accomplishments are merely superficial, an external polish; this is internal and essential. But at the same time that we acknowledge, that the manner and pronunciation of the orator may be improved by that of the actor, we must also admit, on the other side, that by the same means it may be injured. And I have known it, in fact, injured in consequence of too servile an imitation of the stage. I allow, that what hath been advanced regards only the modern English comedy, for, though some of our tragedies are also exceptionable in point of morals, yet they are comparatively but a few, and those by no means faulty in the same way, and much less to the same degree. And as I would with equal freedom approve, and even recommend what I think laudable and useful, as I would censure what I think blameable and hurtful, I cannot deny, but that both in regard to the sentiments, and in the wonderful talent of operating on the passions, the tragic poet will often give important lessons to the preacher. I would be far then from dissuading you from consulting occasionally whatever may contribute to your improvement. Our great apostle, as we learn from his history and

epistles, did not scruple to read the dramatic pieces of heathen poets; nay, he has even thought fit sometimes to quote their sentiments with approbation, and to give their very words the sanction of sacred writ. Where debates arise on any subject, it is almost invariably the case, that both sides run to extremes, alike deserting truth and moderation. It is the part of a wise man, like the bee, to extract from every thing what is good and salutary; and to guard against whatever is of a contrary quality. But I am aware that the most of what I have said on this subject may be looked on as a digression. I acknowledge, it in a great measure is so; but as the mention of it was perfectly apposite, and as few topics have occasioned warmer disputes among Christians, I did not think it suited that decorum of character, which I would wish always to preserve, to appear artfully, when a fair opportunity offers, to avoid telling freely my opinion.

LECTURE VI.

On the Composition of Lectures.

IN my last lecture on the subject of pulpit eloquence I told you, that every discourse was addressed either to the understanding of the hearers, to their imagination, to their passions, or to their will. As those addressed to the understanding may be intended either for explaining something unknown to them, or for proving something disbelieved or doubted by them, sermons in the largest acceptation of the word may be distributed into five classes, the explanatory, the argumentative or controversial, the demonstrative or commendatory, the pathetic, and the persuasive. It will not be amiss here, in order to prevent mistakes, to take notice of the particular import which I mean to give to some terms, as often as I employ them on this subject. The first I shall mention is the term *demonstrative*, which in the application usual with rhetoricians, hath no relation to the sense of the word as used by mathematicians. Here it hath no concern with proof or argument of any kind, but relates solely to the strength and distinctness with which an object is exhibited, so as to render the conceptions of the imagination almost equal in vivacity and vigour with the perceptions of sense. This is entirely agreeable to the use, both of the Latin word *dem-*

onstrativus, and of the Greek *αποδεικτικος* among critics, orators and poets. Another difference I beg you will remark, is between *conviction* and *persuasion*, which, in common language, are frequently confounded. To speculative truth, the term, *conviction*, only with its conjugates, ought to be applied. Thus we say properly, I am convinced of the being of a God. In popular language, we should sometimes in this case say *persuaded*, but this application of the term is evidently inaccurate. Thus also, he hath proved the truth of revelation to my full conviction, or, I attempted to convince him of his error. And even in regard to moral truth, when no more is denoted but the assent of the understanding, the proper term is to convince. I am convinced it is my duty, yet I cannot prevail on myself to do it. This is well illustrated by that of the poet,

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.*

I am convinced, but not persuaded : My understanding is subdued, but not my will : the first term always and solely relates to opinion, the second to practice. The operation of conviction is merely on the understanding, that of persuasion, is on the will and resolution. Indeed the Latin word *persuadeo* is susceptible of precisely the same ambiguity with the English. It is this double meaning which gave occasion to that play upon the word used by Augustine, when he said, “Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris.” The import of which in plain English manifestly is, Though your arguments may convince my reason, they shall not determine my resolution : Or, you may convince, but shall not persuade me. The first of the distinctions now mentioned will serve to discriminate the argumentative or controversial, from the demonstrative or commendatory, the other distinguishes the controversial from the persuasive.

I would further observe, that [though any one discourse admits only one of the ends above enumerated as the principal, nevertheless in the progress of a discourse, many things may be advanced, which are more immediately and apparently directed to some of the other ends of speaking. But then it ought always to appear, that such ends are introduced as means, and rendered conducive to that which is the primary intention. Accordingly the propriety of

* I see the right, and I approve it too,
I hate the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.

these secondary ends will always be inferred from their subserviency to the principal design. For example, a sermon of the first or second kind, the explanatory or the controversial, addressed to the understanding and calculated to illustrate or evince some point of doctrine, may borrow aid from the imagination, and admit metaphor and comparison. But not the bolder and more striking figures, as that called phantasia, prosopopeia, and the like, which are not so much intended to throw light on a subject as to excite admiration; much less will it admit an address to the passions, which never fails to disturb the operation of the intellectual faculty. Either of these, it is obvious, far from being subservient to the main design, simple explanation or proof, would distract the attention from it. Such arts, however, I cannot call them legitimate, have sometimes been successfully used; but in such cases, if impartially examined, the scope of the speaker will be found to have been more to cloud than to enlighten the understandings of his hearers, and to deceive rather than to edify. They are of those unlucky arts, which are naturally fitted more for serving a bad cause, than a good one, and by consequence, when used in a good cause, rather hurt it with the judicious, by rendering it suspected.

Now before I proceed to consider the rules which ought to be observed in these different sorts of composition resulting from their respective natures, I shall make a few remarks on a kind of discourses very common in this country, which come not under the general name of sermons, and follow rules peculiar to themselves. As the Bible is with us Protestants acknowledged to be the repository, and indeed the only original, full, and untainted repository of Christian knowledge; and as the study of it is maintained to be a duty incumbent on every disciple of Christ, that kind of discourses with us commonly called *lectures*, have been devised as means of facilitating to the people the profitable reading of holy writ. We acknowledge, indeed, that in all things essential to salvation, scripture is sufficiently perspicuous even to the vulgar; and that, in such important matters, if any man err, it will be found more the fault of the heart than of the head. But this acknowledgment is nowise inconsistent with the avowal, that there are in this repository many things highly useful and instructive, which do not immediately appear upon the surface, which require more time and application to enable us to discover, and in which in particular it is the province of the pastor to lend his assistance to the illiterate and the

weak. That people may be put in a capacity of reading with judgment and without difficulty, those parts of scripture which are most closely connected with the Christian faith and practice, *lecturing*, or as it is called in some places *expounding*, hath been first prescribed by our church rulers. The end or design of a lecture, therefore, is to explain the train of reasoning contained, or the series of events related, in a certain portion of the sacred text, and to make suitable observations from it, in regard either to the doctrines, or to the duties of our religion. As all discourses of this kind consist of two principal parts, the explication, and the remarks or inferences, so they may be distributed into two classes, according as the one or the other constitutes the principal object of the expounder. In discourses of the first class, it is the chief design of the speaker to explain the import of a portion of scripture, which may not be perfectly clear to Christians of all denominations. In the second, it is his great scope to deduce from a passage, whose general or literal meaning is sufficiently perspicuous, useful reflections concerning providence, the economy of grace, or the conduct of human life. Were we nicely to distinguish the two kinds, I should say that the ultimate end of the former is to teach the people to read the scriptures with understanding, and of the latter to accustom them to read them with reflection. The former therefore may more properly (according to the current import of the words) be termed an *exposition*, and the latter a *lecture*. And in this manner we shall afterwards distinguish them. Both are properly of the explanatory kind, though from the complex nature of the subject, the form of composition will be very different from that of the first class of sermons mentioned above. Indeed several English sermons, for instance those on the compassionate Samaritan, the prodigal son, or any other of our Lord's parables, may strictly be denominated lectures in the sense to which we just now appropriated the term. And of this sort also are several of the homilies of the ancient fathers. Nay there are some discourses, that go under the general appellation of sermons, particularly of Bishop Hoadley and Doctor Clarke, that properly belong to that class we distinguished by the name exposition, being no other than a sort of familiar commentary on some of the most difficult passages in the epistolary writings of the apostle Paul. They differ from us in Scotland, only in the manner in which the explication is introduced from the pulpit. We take the whole portion of scripture for a text; they, commonly a single verse in the end of it, by means of which all the

other verses as connected, are more awkwardly ushered into the discourse; for as all these share equally in the explication, so in most cases the remarks bear no more relation to the text, than to any other sentence in the context. The relation is commonly to the whole taken together, and not to a part considered separately. That it may not be necessary to return afterwards to the consideration of these two classes of discourses, which I denominate expositions and lectures, I shall now make a few observations in regard to their composition, and so dismiss this article.

And first, as to the subject to be chosen, care should be taken, that as much as possible it may be *one*, that is, one distinct passage of history, (if taken from any of the historical books of scripture) one parable, one similitude, one chain of reasoning, or the illustration of one point of doctrine or of duty. When a minister purposes in a course of teaching to give the exposition of a whole book of scripture, it is of much greater moment, and unspeakably more conducive to the edification of the hearers, that in the distribution of the parts, more regard be had to the natural connection, that may subsist between the sentiments, than to the artificial division of the words into chapters and verses. For it is manifest, that in making this distribution of the sacred books, which by the way is an invention merely human and not very ancient, there hath often been very little attention given to the sense. You will easily conceive, that it must be still a greater fault in expounding, to confine one's self regularly, as some do, to the same or nearly the same number of verses. Nothing can tend more effectually to injure the sense, and to darken (instead of enlightening) the subject. Nothing would less fall under the description, which the apostle gives of the manner of the workman that hath no reason to be ashamed, "his rightly dividing the word of truth." To merit this praise, one must, like a skilful anatomist, chiefly attend, in the division, to the distinctive characters and limits, which nature hath assigned to the several parts; and not, like a carver for the table, merely to the size and form.

The second remark I shall make, is that if the portion of scripture be, as to the sense, not so independent of the words immediately preceding, but that some attention to these will throw light upon the sacred lesson, the preacher may very properly introduce himself to his subject by pointing out in a few words the connection. There are cases in which this is necessary; there are in which we should say it were improper, and there are no doubt in which it is

discretionary. Of the first kind are many passages in Paul's epistles; for though perhaps you can say of the passage with strict propriety, it is one, because it is only one topic that is treated in it, or at least the argument is considered in one particular point of view, yet it makes, as it were, a member of a train of reasoning which runs through several chapters; and of this series it may be requisite to take a cursory review, in order to obtain a more distinct apprehension of the import of the passage read. It is improper, when there is no connection at all with the words preceding, as in the relation given us of several of the miracles performed by our Lord, which have no other connection in the history than that the one in fact preceded the other; or it may be only, that the one is first related, and the other immediately after. The same may be said of several of the parables. Some of these indeed have a natural connection with a preceding passage, having been pronounced by our Lord in the illustration of some point which he had been just inculcating. In such cases, when the design of the parable is sufficiently clear of itself, to trace the connection is not absolutely necessary. As good use, however, may be made of it, it cannot be called improper. This therefore is an example of those cases wherein it is discretionary. There are several other instances which the intelligent hearer will easily distinguish for himself. I shall mention only one. Were it the design of a preacher to expound to a congregation the Lord's prayer, as recorded in the sixth chapter of Matthew, he may justly consider it as a matter of mere choice, whether he shall take any notice of the words preceding or of the subsequent, because though his text be connected with both, it is so independently intelligible, and so completely one in itself, that he is under no necessity to recur to these for the illustration of his subject.

My third observation shall be, that his exposition of the portion of scripture read, may either be, verse by verse, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, where there is any obscurity or difficulty in the verse, sentence or paragraph, that seems to require it; or it may be, by a kind of paraphrase of the whole passage. I have observed already that there are two kinds of discourses, the exposition, and the lecture, into which this class may be distributed; the former of these methods, by verses or sentences, is best suited to the first, the latter by paraphrase, to the second. In the first, there are supposed some difficulties to be removed and some darkness to be dispelled; in order to this, more minuteness and closer attention

to the several parts is necessary. In the second, as the scope of the whole passage is supposed to be abundantly perspicuous, a few pertinent introductory remarks may sometimes happily enough supersede the necessity even of a paraphrase.

The fourth observation shall be in relation to the difficulties, which, in the first species of lectures mentioned, the expounder must endeavour to remove. And they are these—an apparent inconsistency between the import of any verse or expression and the principles of right reason, or a seeming contradiction to other texts of scripture, or to any known historical fact; in like manner if the words taken literally seem to support any erroneous opinion, or to authorize any improper practice, or if the preacher is aware that it consists with the knowledge of a considerable part of his audience, that such uses are made of the words by some sect or party still subsisting amongst us. I mention these things with the greater caution, because if the difficulties are not obvious of themselves, or are such as can be reasonably thought to have come to the knowledge of very few, if any, in the auditory, it is much better they remain unnoticed by the speaker, lest he should be imagined to have more the talent of suggesting scruples and raising difficulties than of removing them. And this will especially hold, in regard to what hath at any time been pleaded in favour of the errors of ancient or distant sects, of which the congregation knows little or nothing, and by whose arts they can be in no hazard of being seduced. If the subjects were, for example, the parable of the supper, in the 14th chapter of Luke, it would be very pertinent to show that the expression, “Compel them to come in,” which occurs in that passage, doth not authorize persecution or force in matters of religion; because it is notorious, that this absurd use hath been and still is made of the words. But if the portion of scripture to be explained were the first chapter of the gospel by John, to what Christian congregation would it answer any valuable purpose, to make them acquainted with the ravings of the Gnostics and their wild extravagancies about the *Eons*?

I shall add, that particular care ought to be taken in expounding the scriptures to the people, not to appear over-learned and over-critical in one's explications. There is no occasion to obtrude on an audience, as some do, all the jarring interpretations given by different commentators, of which it is much better that the people should remain ignorant, than that they should be apprized. For this knowledge can serve no other purpose, than to distract their

thoughts and perplex their judgment. Before you begin to build, it is necessary to remove such impediments, as lie directly in your way; but you could not account him other than a very foolish builder, who should first collect a deal of rubbish, which was not in his way, and consequently could not have obstructed his work, that he might have the pleasure and merit of removing it. And do the fantastic, absurd and contradictory glosses of commentators deserve a better name than rubbish? No, surely. But if such absurd glosses are unknown to your congregation, they are rubbish which lies not in your way. No interpretation therefore or gloss should ever be mentioned in order to be refuted, unless it be such as the words themselves, on a superficial view, might seem to countenance, or such as is generally known to the people to be put upon them by some interpreters, or sects of Christians. Where a false gloss cannot be reasonably supposed to be either known or thought of by the audience, it is in the preacher worse, than being idly ostentatious of his learning, to introduce such erroneous gloss or comment. And as to an excess of criticism in this exercise, it ought also doubtless carefully to be avoided. We must always remember the difference between a church and a college. In most Christian congregations there are very few, if any, linguists. I do not say that in our lectures we ought never to mention the original, or recur to it. Justice to the passage we explain may sometimes require it. Nor is it necessary, that our translators should be deemed infallible even by the multitude. It is enough, that we consider as the pure dictates of the Spirit those intimations with which the prophets and apostles were inspired. But then, on the other hand, it is neither modest nor prudent in the preacher, especially if a young man, to be at every turn censuring the translators, and pretending to mend their version. It is not modest, as they, over whom the corrector assumes a superiority, are allowed on all hands to have been men of eminent talents and erudition. And it is not prudent, as this practice never fails to produce in the minds of the people a want of confidence in their Bible, which tends greatly to lessen its authority. Therefore, though I am by no means for ascribing infallibility to any human expositors, propriety requires, that we should neither too often, nor too abruptly tax with blundering, before such a promiscuous audience as our congregations commonly are, men of so respectable memory. Manly freedom of inquiry, becoming a Protestant, becoming a Briton, tempered with that decent reserve which suits the humble Christian, will guard the

judicious against both extremes, an overweening conceit of his own abilities, and an implicit faith in those of others. And indeed in regard to every thing, which may be introduced either in the way of criticism or comment, it ought ever to be remembered, that it is not enough, that such an observation is just, that such an interpretation hath actually been given, or that such an opinion hath been maintained; the previous inquiry, which the preacher ought to make by himself is, whether it be of any consequence to the people to be informed of the observation, comment, or opinion. This inquiry impartially made will prove a check against the immoderate indulgence of what is perhaps the natural bent of his own genius, whether it be to critical or controversial disquisition, and which it is not always easy for youth, commonly impetuous and opinionative, duly to restrain. If on other occasions, more especially on this, the apostolical admonition ought to be sacredly observed, that "nothing proceed out of the speaker's mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." But for our direction in this kind of discernment, no precepts, it must be acknowledged, will suffice. A fund of good sense is absolutely necessary, enlightened by a knowledge of mankind. In this, as in every other kind of composition, the maxim of the poet invariably holds,

*Scribendi recte sapere est principium et fons.**

I shall just add the fifth and last observation in relation to the remarks or inferences. These, as was hinted already, in the exposition, whose chief aim is to throw light on the sacred text and remove the difficulties, are to be considered as only a subordinate part of the discourse; in the lecture, they are to be considered as the principal. In the former therefore they do not require to be so fully treated, as in the latter. It is enough, that the remarks are just in themselves, pertinent in regard to the subject of discourse, and expressed with sufficient perspicuity and energy. But in the lecture, properly so called, where the observations are the primary object of the speaker, and that for which the passage of scripture was chosen as a text, it is not enough that they be just, pertinent and perspicuous; they require besides, to be more copiously treated, and such of them as are of a practical nature to be more warmly enforced. Nay, they admit all that variety in respect of illustration,

* Good sense is the source of good writing.

proof, and recommendation, which are to found in discourses explanatory, controversial, or persuasive. Only for the sake of unity, it may be proper to add, that all the remarks compared among themselves should be congenial, and tend to illustrate one another, that is, all doctrinal, or all practical; and whether the one, or the other, that they be points nearly and mutually related, that thus the discourse may, if I may so express myself, be of one colour and tenour throughout. Quick transitions from the warmth of the pathos, to coldness of criticism, from the moral and persuasive to the abstract and argumentative, or inversely, from the critical to the pathetic, and from the abstract to the persuasive, are neither natural nor easy. Now the transitions here, if there be any, must be quick, even immediate, since they result from the different natures of the remarks that immediately succeed one another. In the first kind, which we distinguished by the name exposition, there is no occasion for so much delicacy in regard to the inferences deduced; because in it, they being only of a secondary nature in respect to the scope of the performance, particular discussions would neither be proper nor expected. All that is requisite is that they be true, fairly deduced, and properly expressed. Now thus much, whatever be the nature of the truths remarked, can make no alteration in the character of the performance. In this species, the observations are properly no more than inferences, whose evidence, illustration, or enforcement, should always be found in the exposition that preceded them; whereas in the lecture properly so called, though the connection of the remarks with the portion of scripture previously and briefly explained, ought to be very clear, they are introduced with express view of being supported, illustrated, or enforced in the body of the discourse, to which the explication of the text serves only as an introduction. So much shall serve for what we call expositions or lectures, I shall next proceed to the different sorts of sermons above defined.

LECTURE VII.

Of Explanatory Sermons—The choice of a Subject and of Texts.

IN my last prelection on the subject of pulpit eloquence, after enumerating the different sorts of discourses, from the consideration of the faculty addressed, I entered particularly into the examination of those, which with us are commonly called lectures, and which we divided into two sorts, one, whose principal end was to remove difficulties in a passage not perfectly clear; the other whose aim was to form and enforce useful observations from a passage naturally fitted to give scope for reflection. The first, we called exposition; the second, lecture. I now return to the consideration of those discourses, which come under the general denomination of sermons, and which were distributed into five orders, the explanatory, the controversial, the commendatory, the pathetic and the persuasive. The first and the simplest is the explanatory, which may be defined a sermon addressed to the understanding of the hearers, and of which the direct view is to explain some doctrine of our religion, or the nature and extent of some duty. In this species of discourses, the preacher's antagonist (if I may so express myself) is ignorance, which it is his business to dispel.

The first thing, that falls under consideration, is the choice of a subject. And in this, care ought to be taken, that whether it be more or less extensive, it may be strictly and properly *one*, that it may neither be imperfect, and consequently afford the audience but an indistinct apprehension of the matter discussed, whether it be the explication of a tenet, or of a precept of christianity; nor redundant, by being conjoined with other points or topics, which however useful in themselves, are neither immediately connected with, nor necessary to the elucidation of what is properly the subject. The rule of the poet,

Sit quod vis simplex duntaxat et unum.*

will be found a good rule, not only in epic and dramatic poetry, but in every kind of composition without exception. The reason is, it is founded in nature, and what is adapted to the faculties of a be-

* Let your proposed object be simple and one.

ing such as man. When things are brought together into a discourse, between which there is no immediate connection, that which happens to be last said, goes far to obliterate out of the minds of the hearers all that went before. There being no natural and manifest relation between the things themselves, and no dependence that the one has on the other, the last mentioned thought or topic doth as it were exclude its predecessor, by entirely occupying its place. Whereas in clearing up the several parts of one entire subject, whatever it be, the explication of every other branch or member, as you advance, necessarily tends, by the laws of association in our ideas, to recal to our reflections the account given of those that preceded, with which its several parts are naturally and intimately connected. That we may form some idea of the influence of connection, simplicity and unity upon the memory, do but consider the effect in point of remembrance, for it is of this only I am now speaking, that would be produced upon an audience by one of our Lord's parables, for example, or by a distinct passage of his history, or of that of the apostles, or by any one speech of Peter or Paul recorded in the Acts, and compare with it the effect that will be produced by reading an equal portion of the book of Proverbs, or of the 119th psalm, in neither of which was there any connection of sentiments proposed, the greater part of the first being intended merely as a collection of wise observations, but independent one of another, on the conduct of life; and the other as a collection of pious ejaculations, arranged, not by affinity in the sentiments, but by the letters in the Hebrew alphabet with which the several sentences begin. But what is necessary to constitute this unity of subject and design, we shall have occasion more particularly to consider afterwards.

A subject being chosen, the next thing to be sought is the text. This seems calculated to answer a double purpose. In the first place, it serves as a motto to the discourse, notifying to the congregation the aim and subject of the preacher; secondly, being taken from sacred writ, it adds a certain dignity and importance to the subject, shewing that it hath a foundation in scripture, the only standard of our religion. It may not be amiss here to examine a little, some objections, that have been thrown out by a celebrated writer of the present century, in his *Age of Lewis* the 14th, against this method so universally practised by preachers of introducing their subject to the hearers by a text. "Perhaps," says he, "it were to be wished that in banishing from the pulpit the bad taste

which dishonoured it, this custom of preaching on a text had also been banished. In fact, to speak long on a quotation of a line or two, to labour in regulating one's whole discourse by that line, such a toil appears an amusement scarcely becoming the dignity of the ministry. The text proves a sort of device, or rather riddle, which the discourse unravels. The Greeks and the Romans never knew this usage. It was in the decline of letters that it began, and time hath consecrated it." The author must here doubtless be understood to mean by Greeks and Romans, those nations whilst in a state of paganism, for that this practice was current among the Greek and the Latin fathers of the church appears manifestly from such of their works as are yet extant. And indeed to acquaint us gravely, and urge it as an argument, that the pagan priests never preached upon a text, must appear extraordinary to one who attends to this small circumstance, that they never preached at all, that there was nothing in all their various modes of superstition, which was analogous to what is called preaching among Christians. And even if there had been any thing among them that bore an analogy to preaching, their example could not have had the least authority with us in this particular, as it is notorious they had no acknowledged infallible or established standard of doctrine corresponding to our Bible, whence their texts could have been drawn. But if our author alludes in this, not to the customs of the heathen priests, but to those of the demagogues and pleaders, the cases are so exceedingly dissimilar, that hardly can any comparison with propriety be made between them, or any inference drawn, from the usage of the one to what is proper in the other. If indeed we make the proper allowances for the disparity in the cases, the example of the ancient orators will be found rather to favour than to discountenance the practice; because though they had nothing which could in strict propriety be called a text, they had in effect a subject propounded, to which they were bound in speaking to confine themselves. Thus in judiciary or forensic harangues, the summons or indictment was to all intents a text, and in the deliberative orations pronounced in the senate house or in the assembly of the people, the overture or motion which gave rise to the debate answered precisely the same purpose. At least one of the designs above mentioned, which the text with us is calculated to answer, namely, a notification to the hearers, and a remembrancer as to the subject of discourse, was fully accomplished, and as to the other end, the difference in the nature of the thing superseded the use

of it. The only species of discourses with them, in which there was nothing that bore the least analogy to this so universal usage among Christian teachers, was the demonstrative, or their eulogiums on the dead. And here doubtless the notoriety of the occasion and purpose of their meeting, which was commonly at funeral solemnities, rendered any verbal intimation of the subject less necessary, than in the two others already taken notice of. It may indeed be urged in answer to what hath been said, that the preacher himself may intimate his subject in as explicit terms as he pleases before he begin. But to this I would reply, that a bare intimation is not enough in a matter of so great consequence, that the effect of the whole discourse in a great measure depends upon the attention given to it. Nothing can serve better to fix their attention than this solemn manner of ushering in the discourse, by reading a passage of sacred writ, in which every person, at least in protestant congregations, may satisfy himself by recurring to the passage mentioned in his own Bible; at the same time nothing can serve better as a monitor of the speaker's view, if the text hath been judiciously chosen, and the sermon be apposite, since the people, if they please, may have it constantly in their eye. I acknowledge at the same time that the use of a text, as either a device or an enigma, is justly reprehensible, and that the conceited choice that hath been made of passages of holy writ for this purpose, and the strange manner wherein such passages have been treated in the sermon, as when the words and phrases are more properly discoursed on than the sentiment, have given an ample scope for this censure. Only it ought to be remembered, that the censure strikes solely against the abuse of this method of notifying, and not against the use of it.

It may not be amiss here to inquire a little by the way into the origin of this practice. That there is no trace of it in the ordinary discourses of our Lord and his apostles is freely owned. They spoke by immediate inspiration. They gave, by the miracles they wrought, the most authentic evidences of the authority, with which they were endowed. It did not suit the dignity of their mission, or of the spirit by which they spoke, to have recourse to any passage as giving a further sanction to their words, or as setting bounds to what they should declare. Besides, they claimed to be the heralds of a new revelation from heaven, which though founded on the old, superadded a great deal to it. After their time, the doctrine they taught having been committed to writing in the histories of our Lord and his apostles, and in the epistles occasionally written by some of the latter, the teachers who succeeded them did

not pretend to any new revelation, but to deliver faithfully that, and only that, which they had received from their inspired predecessors. It became accordingly an important part of their public ministry and service, to read certain portions from the writings now styled canonical, as being the great rule of faith and practice left them by these founders of the Christian church. The usage they are said to have borrowed from the Jews, who since their return from the Babylonish captivity duly read in their synagogues every Sabbath portions of the law and of the prophets. But indeed the reason of the thing so strongly indicates the propriety of the practice, that there is no need of recurring to Jewish example for its origin. When there was any difficulty in the passage of scripture read, this gave a natural occasion to the minister, who was the teacher of the congregation in matters of religion, to endeavour to remove it; and even where there was no difficulty, the words would often furnish a handle for seasonable exhortations and admonitions. Occasions of exhorting the people in this way were sometimes taken from the weekly lessons in the law or in the prophets in the Jewish synagogues, as appears occasionally both from our Lord's history and that of the apostles. (See for this Luke iv. 16, &c. Acts xiii. 14, &c.) Accordingly it appears that the earliest discourses from the pulpit were very much of the nature of our expositions and lectures, and that the subject was not at first arbitrarily chosen by the speaker, but such as came in course of reading the scriptures. It will easily be conceived how in process of time the pastors did not always think it necessary to confine themselves to the portion of reading appointed for the day, especially, as there could not fail to arise occasions of addressing the people either for warning, consolation or admonition in any particular emergency, to which other passages of sacred writ would be more directly adapted. It may also be supposed, that sometimes in their discourses they would be so much engrossed by one principal point they then wished to inculcate, as would make them narrow the size of their compositions, and limit themselves in using no more from the sacred page, than was entirely apposite to their subject. A deference however to antiquity, a veneration for the scriptures, an avowal that the writings of the prophets and apostles were the only source of all their doctrine, and a desire of supplying the people with what might serve as a remembrancer of the subject of discourse, would conspire to preserve a custom, which, though not absolutely necessary, must be allowed at least to be both decent and convenient. So much for the origin and history of this usage in Christian

congregations. A usage which in my opinion ought to be the more sacredly preserved, as it may be justly considered as an ancient and universal, though implicit testimony, that no doctrine whatever deserves to be considered as a principle of Christianity, which hath not its foundation in holy writ. After this short digression, I shall now inquire what things they are, which particularly demand our attention in the choice of a text. And on this topic I shall speak the more largely, as what is to be offered on it will not regard the explanatory discourses only, but all the different sorts of sermons above defined.

And first, doubtless the passage chosen for this purpose ought to be plain and *perspicuous*. Without this quality of perspicuity, neither of the ends of introducing in this manner the subject can be answered by it. If obscure, and hardly at first hearing intelligible, it cannot be called a notification of the subject; as little can it give the sanction of holy writ to a subject which it doth not notify. One may err against this rule in more ways than one. First, the passage may in itself be obscure, and such as no person on a single reading, not to say the illiterate, can be supposed to divine the sense of. Such is a passage from Isaiah (xxi. 11, 12) on which I once heard a sermon. "He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." Who could pretend to say from such a text what the subject of discourse were? But there are some people of that strange turn of mind, that obscurity itself is as strong a recommendation to them, as perspicuity would be to others. Not that they are influenced in this by the sentiment of the poet,

Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem;*

for commonly there is to the full as little light in the performance, as is discernible to an ordinary understanding in the text, the only circumstance perhaps in which the choice can be said to be apposite. The real motive of such almost invariably is, to excite in the ignorant multitude an admiration of their profound learning and most amazing penetration, who can discover wonders, where other people can perceive nothing at all. Nor do they in this particular lose their aim. But this is one of the many little arts of attracting the veneration of the populace, which is totally unworthy, I say not of the Christian pastor, but of every ingenuous mind.

* Not smoke from light, but light from smoke to bring.

But further, a passage of scripture considered in itself, and its connection, may be perfectly perspicuous, and yet, as a text, may be extremely dark, because nothing that can be called a subject of discourse is suggested by it. Thus these words, "A bell and a pomegranate, and a bell and a pomegranate," (Exod. xxxix. 26,) are sufficiently intelligible in scripture, as expressing certain ornaments, with which alternately the border of the pontifical ephod was to be decorated; but there is not one of a thousand who would conjecture what the design of the preacher were, who should read these words to his congregation for a text. I have heard of a declaimer, one of those (and there are several such) that will rather take the most inconvenient road in the world, than keep the beaten path, who chose the words above quoted, as the ground of a discourse on this topic, that faith and holiness in the Christian life do ever accompany each other. It would not be easy to conceive a more extravagant flight. But where, you say, is the connection in the subject? It requires but a small share of fancy, to make out a figurative connection any where. Faith cometh by hearing. And could one desire a better reason for making the bell, which is sonorous, an emblem of faith? Holiness is fruitful in good works. How can it then be better represented than by a pomegranate which is a very pleasant fruit? I am not fond of conceits in any serious matter; they have something so trivial and playful in them; but if they are any where specially unsuitable, it is in the pulpit. I remember to have seen announced in the news-papers the text of an anniversary sermon, the nature of the occasion I do not know. The text was, (Jud. iv. 20.) "Thou shalt say no." Here nothing can be clearer than the expression or verse, as indeed the whole passage is to which it belongs; yet nothing can be darker, than the text, as it is impossible to say with truth that it suggests any subject of discourse whatever. I will add further, that though the text, when interpreted agreeably to the meaning of the writer, may be said to suggest the subject (which cannot be said of any of those above quoted) yet when it is so figuratively expressed, as that the import of it is not sufficiently obvious to the bulk of a congregation, some more explicit proposition ought to be preferred. This observation is not to be understood as extending to those figures which are so current in scripture, and now so generally understood by Christians of all denominations, that they cannot be said to hurt the plainness of the passage in the least. Of this kind are the putting of a part of religion, as the love of God, or the fear of God, for the whole, as-

scribing passions and bodily members to the Deity, personifying wisdom and the like, or those ordinary metaphors whereby a religious life is represented by a race, a journey, or a fight. These cannot be said to give the least obstruction in reading, to those who are but a very little acquainted with their Bible. In like manner in the choice of a text, I should think it proper to avoid passages in which there is an apparent ambiguity. For though the context should sufficiently determine the sense, yet if the words taken separately are ambiguous, they do not distinctly answer the purpose of a notification of the speaker's aim. So much shall serve for the first article, perspicuity.

The next point to be attended to is, that they be *pertinent*. It were better not to have a text, than one that would mislead the hearers as to the subject of discourse, and such would be the case, if the text pointed one way and the sermon another. And here I cannot help observing the fantastical choice, that hath been made by some English preachers who have purposely chosen such passages as seemingly contradict what they propose as the scope of their sermon. Two very eminent men in that church, Doctor Clarke and Bishop Hoadly, in their controversial or argumentative discourses frequently adopt this method. The latter, for example, to a sermon whose chief design is to show the absurdity of the opinion that all hope of pardon is cut off in the gospel from Christians, who have been wilful sinners, hath chosen for his text Heb. x. 26, 27. "If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." And to another, which he hath titled, the Mistake of relying on Faith considered, he hath prefixed in the same way, Eph. ii. 8, "By grace are ye saved through faith." I do not here enter into the consideration of the justness of his doctrine, but the preposterousness of his choice. I know his reason was, thus to take an occasion of explaining a passage, that had been much employed on the opposite side of the controversy, in such a way as to show that though it might apparently, it did not really (when properly understood) contradict his design. But this plea, unless when such explication is made the sole end of the discourse, in which case it falls under that species of lecture called exposition, whereof we have given some account already, otherwise, I say this plea doth by no means vindicate a choice subversive of all the purposes which a text is intended to

answer. It is the less vindicable as it is perfectly unnecessary. The explication of a passage apparently opposing the doctrine maintained in the discourse, it would be much more pertinent to introduce and obviate in answering the objections and arguments of the antagonists. There appears in both these authors, and in others misled by their example, a want of taste in this particular, however great their talents in other respects may have been.

The third quality in a proper text is, that it be full; that is, that it be expressive not of a part, but of the whole scope of the discourse; otherwise it imperfectly answers both the ends above mentioned: and we may say, with justice, that part of the sermon is entirely without a text.

The fourth and last quality is, that it be simple, nowise redundant, or expressive of more than the single scope of the sermon. An instance of a text which in the purport of it is properly complex is that above quoted, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace ye are saved through faith." The first part, "by grace ye are saved," is a full and perfect text for the discussion of one point of doctrine, which is to show in what respect the source of our salvation is divine grace. The other part, "ye are saved through faith, is equally perfect for the explication of another point, which is to show, in what respect the instrument of our salvation is faith. Let it be observed here, to prevent mistakes, that a sentence may be grammatically complex, which is nevertheless simple in regard to the sentiment conveyed by it, and therefore sufficiently proper for a text. Such a one is that in Prov. iii. 17. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And even that last quoted from the Hebrews, though consisting of two long verses, is perfectly simple in regard to the sense.

I shall make two other observations on the subject of texts, and so conclude this article. One is, that as a great part of holy writ is historical, wherein things are simply related as spoken, without any mark of approbation or blame from the sacred historian; we ought, when we can be otherwise well supplied, to avoid such places, since passages taken thence, though recorded in scripture, have not the stamp of revelation, and therefore are not fitted for answering the second purpose of a text above mentioned. I acknowledge, however, that when the sentiment in itself is manifestly agreeable to the dictates of natural or the general tenour of revealed religion, it would be an excess of scrupulousness to reject it. Should every

thing (for example) said by Job's three friends be avoided, because we have the best authority to affirm, that in some things they did not speak right ? or should even all that Job himself said be set aside, because he acknowledged that he had uttered what he understood not, things too wonderful for him which he knew not ? In all such dubious cases, great regard is to be had to the character of the speaker, the occasion, the import, and the design of the speech. On all these accounts, it was a most absurd choice which one made of a text for a sermon on the future glory of the saints in heaven. This sublime doctrine he chose to treat from these words of the serpent to our first mother Eve, Gen. iii. 5. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." For though the words taken abstractly might be apposite enough, we know that as they stand in scripture, they have no relation to the heavenly happiness ; but what renders them still more exceptionable, as a text, is, they are the words of the father of lies, and in the sense in which he used them, contain a lie, and were employed but too successfully for the purpose of seduction. The only other observation I mean to make is, as scripture does not consist of a number of aphorisms, it will sometimes be difficult, if not impossible, to find texts for some very suitable subjects, conformable to all the rules above laid down. It must be owned, that in such cases, it is far better to deviate from these rules, than to avoid discussing an edifying and pertinent subject. All that can be said in that case is, that if the rules be reasonable, the deviation ought to be as little as possible. Nor let any one think this point a matter of little or no moment. As a good choice may contribute previously to rouse attention, and even to put the hearers in a proper frame for the subject to be discoursed on, as well as to keep their minds in the time of preaching from wandering from the subject ; so, on the contrary, an improper choice will often serve to dissipate the thoughts, and put the mind in a frame nowise suitable. I can say for myself that I have been witness to instances of both effects. I have observed sometimes, that the bare reading of the text hath served to compose the minds of the audience into an earnest and attentive expectation of what was to be said. I have seen an ill adapted text, on the contrary, especially when there was any thing fantastic in the choice, excite a very different emotion in the audience, and dispose their minds not to be edified, but amused.

LECTURE VIII.

Of the Explanatory Sermons—The Introduction—Exposition of the Text—Partition of the Subject. Unity a principal requisite in the Subject—How this is to be preserved—Offences against Unity.

IN my last discourse on the subject of Christian eloquence, I entered on the consideration of that species of sermons, which we distinguished by the name of explanatory, whose principal intention is, agreeably to the name, to explain the import of any doctrine or the extent of any precept of our religion. And first, I took occasion to inquire into the origin and history of that method now so universal in Christendom, of introducing our subject to the audience, by a portion of sacred writ, called a text. I inquired into the principal uses which a text is intended to answer, and from this was naturally led to deduce the rules, whereby we ought to be directed in the choice. On this topic I was the more particular, as the same observations, though introduced merely in the examination of one species of discourses, would hold equally with regard to them all. I shall now proceed to consider the other parts of the explanatory sermon.

The first thing here, that falls under review, is the exordium or *introduction*, the great design of which is (agreeably to the rules of rhetoricians) to awaken and fix the attention of the audience. Nothing can be more obvious, than that if the hearers will not attend, the preacher addresses them to no purpose, his speaking is no better than beating the air. The first requisite, therefore, on their part, is some expectation and consequent desire. This is absolutely necessary to render them attentive. A certain degree of curiosity is natural in an auditory, just at the moment that a speaker is ready to open his mouth. But then it will depend very much on him, either to work up this favourable inclination in people into a devout and even anxious attention, or to extinguish it altogether, and not only to extinguish it, but even to create in them the contrary dispositions of weariness and disgust. Such topics, therefore, as manifestly tend to conciliate a favourable hearing from the congregation, as rouse in them the hope of something momentous or interesting, are especially adapted to the introductory part of the discourse. No doubt some regard must be had to this end through the whole of the performance. But it is the direct business of the

exordium, to inspire a disposition, which the other parts of the sermon ought to preserve from expiring. And as to the manner, in which this purpose may be best effected, it is evident, that the preacher's topics should be drawn chiefly or solely from that which is to be the subject of discourse. The church, in this respect more delicate than either the tribunal or the senate, doth not so easily admit the urging of considerations merely personal, for winning the affection of the hearers. The venerable aged senator may not ungracefully preface his harangue with topics taken from his years, experience, and public services. The hearers, conscious of the truth, will think him well entitled to avail himself of such a plea; and the mention of these particulars will serve to rouse their attention and regard. It is only in extraordinary circumstances, that this conduct would be tolerable in the preacher. I do not say it never would. We have excellent patterns in this way in the prophet Samuel, and in the apostle Paul. See 1 Sam. xii. 1, &c. Acts xx. 18, &c. The young barrister will sometimes, just in opening, plead successfully for some indulgence to his youth and inexperience. An apology of this kind, if gracefully and naturally expressed, will be ascribed, not to want of merit, but to modesty, a quality very engaging especially in youth. The same plea would be more hazardous from the pulpit, and therefore can rarely, if ever, be attempted there. Any view that seems ultimately to point to self, any thing that may be considered as either directly or indirectly courting popular applause, will be stigmatized as vanity, a disposition which will meet with no quarter in a place consecrated as it were to the purposes of humbling the pride of man, and advancing the honour of his Maker. Passing therefore some extraordinary cases, the only topics which the preacher can safely make use of in the introduction, for gaining the devout attention of the hearers, ought to be drawn from the nature of the subject to be discussed. And these are various in different subjects. But there is no subject, with which our religion presents us, that will not afford some handle by which it may be recommended to the favourable attention of the hearers. On one subject, the leading principle for rousing our attention will be its sublimity, on another its importance, on a third perhaps its pleasantness, and on a fourth its novelty. Do not mistake me. I by no means intend to insinuate, that any tenet or precept of religion can be strictly called new. I only mean, that when the subject of discourse rarely receives a discussion from the pulpit, the examination of it may be considered as

new to the congregation ; they not having the same opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with it as with some other topics, which, if more momentous, are at the same time more trite. Perhaps the subject is one of those, against which we are sure, from the known character of the congregation, there are certain prejudices. A case of this kind requires a peculiar delicacy. A modest attempt to remove unfavourable prepossessions is in such a case extremely proper in the entry. Butler's sermon on the Love of God affords a very suitable example in this way. It deserves also to be remarked, that a preacher ought in the exordium cautiously to shun being so particular as might anticipate what should be advanced afterwards ; that he ought here to proceed on such principles as are generally, if not universally, admitted ; such as approved maxims, incontestible observations ; otherwise its obscurity will rather avert than attract the attention of the audience. And if in order to prevent this obscurity, one should fall into a train of reasoning, or be at particular pains to explain and illustrate the principles advanced, it is manifest this conduct would convert into a real discourse, what ought to be no more than a prelude ; it would extend the introduction to an undue length, and so far from answering the design of preparing the hearers to receive with attention the discussion of the subject, it would tend to make them lose sight of it altogether, by engaging them deeply in different, though related questions. In regard to the language of the introduction, it ought to be, in a particular manner, perspicuous and distinct. There is rarely scope in the introductory part of any kind of sermons, and much less in that of an explanatory sermon, for rhetorical tropes and figures. But as the expression should be plain and clear, the sentiments ought to be striking and almost self-evident.

The next part that requires to be considered, after the exordium, is *the exposition of the text*. And here it ought to be observed, that no more of the context should come under the notice of the preacher, than what may serve to corroborate or illustrate the thoughts advanced in the introduction, or what may be of use for throwing light upon the text. It is often necessary to take for texts, passages wherein the thing spoken of, or what is closely connected with it, is expressed by a relative pronoun, in which there is a reference to what immediately preceded. The text in such cases is not intelligible but as it stands in connection with the foregoing words. Such a text, for example, would be that in Psalm xix. 11. "In keeping of them there is great reward," where it is only

from the context you can learn the import of the pronoun *them*. The same may be said of the possessive *his* in the following passage, which may be used as a text, 1 John v. 3. "His commandments are not grievous." But when the text itself is sufficiently perspicuous, and however closely connected, independently intelligible, and when the sentiments of the context do not happen to have any coincidence with those employed by the preacher for introducing his subject, it is by no means necessary to take any notice of the context at all. Nay, it often proves in fact rather a digression from the subject, than a constituent part of the discourse. Immemorial custom, I acknowledge, hath with us given a kind of sanction to this practice, as to many other improper ones; but it belongs to judgment and taste, to distinguish those cases wherein it is useful, and those wherein it is foreign to the purpose. And that is always to be held foreign, which, however just and even profitable abstractly considered, nowise contributes to promote that which is the ultimate aim of the discourse. When the text, as in the two passages last mentioned, has a reference to the context, but at the same time there is nothing in the context, which is not as to its meaning perfectly obvious to an ordinary capacity, it will suffice barely to repeat such of the preceding verses as have the most immediate connection with the text. Sometimes indeed it will do better to give an abstract of the story or of the reasoning, of which the text is a part, and that, without particularizing any of the passages. But in the election to be made out of these different methods, it behoveth us of necessity to leave the preacher to the guidance of his own judgment. The choice depends on such a variety of minute circumstances as renders it insusceptible of rules. The text itself, if necessary, may be explained, either by a paraphrase or otherwise. If by a paraphrase, it should be simple and brief, and no more in effect than a mere explicit declaration of the subject of discourse. If a looser method of expounding the passage is preferred, this exposition ought to terminate in a sentence, distinctly proposing the doctrine or duty to be explained.

The next thing that comes to be considered is *the partition*, or, as it is more commonly termed, the division of the subject into its constituent branches. And here doubtless the logical rules ought to be inviolably observed. The partition ought to exhaust the subject, insomuch that no part be left uncomprehended, and it ought to extend no farther, so as to comprehend any thing else. And as far as is possible in a consistency with these, a natural sim-

plicity ought to be studied in this part in particular. Nothing harasses the memory of the hearers, more than a multiplicity of, what is called, the heads or chief topics of discourse. As where there is any partition of the subject they cannot be fewer than two, they never ought to exceed four or five. These for the most part ought in explanatory discourses, which are directed solely to the understanding, and which should preserve an appearance of accuracy and precision throughout the whole, to be very explicitly laid before the hearers. As an instance of a just partition, that given by Dr. Tillotson of the nature and extent of gospel obedience, may serve for an example. The properties of such an obedience, he divides into these three, sincerity, universality and constancy. This division is taken from the essential qualities of the subject; it may sometimes be taken from the component parts. The preacher's design, I shall suppose, is to explain the duty of prayer, and from the consideration of the constituent members of his subject, he divides his discourse into three heads destined severally for the explanation of the three parts, *confession*, *petition* and *thanksgiving*. To these some improperly add a fourth, *adoration*, I say improperly, because this, so far from being a distinct member, is necessarily implied in each of the others; insomuch that none of them can be explained or conceived without it. Each implies the acknowledgment of the superintendency and perfections of God, and of our own dependency and obligations. Such a distribution, therefore, in which adoration were made a separate member, would be as though one should divide an animal body into these four parts, the head, the trunk, the limbs, and the blood, which last is manifestly essential to all the parts, and does not constitute a separate branch or member, as it pervades the whole and every part. This by the way may serve as a specimen of a faulty division. As to the order, in which the different branches ought to be proposed and treated, that is no doubt sometimes discretionary, but more frequently it may be determined by something in the nature of the subject. That which is simplest and plainest ought generally to be begun with; and from this we ought to advance to that which is less obvious and more complex; but of this more afterwards. So far I thought it proper to proceed in considering the general qualities, which affect the introduction, the exposition of the text and context, where an exposition of either or both is necessary, and the propounding of the subject and the method.

Before we proceed, it will be necessary to consider a little more particularly, in what manner the text and the subject ought to be

adapted to each other. And here the first thing that necessarily demands our attention is, that the text ought to be chosen for the subject, and not the subject for the text. Nor will this observation be found, upon inquiry, of so little moment as at first sight it may appear to be. It is manifest from the general taste and manner that has hitherto prevailed in preaching, that the text, rather indeed the words of a certain portion of scripture, hath been the primary consideration, and the subject at best but a secondary one. Or if it hath happened, that the subject hath been first thought of by the speaker, he no sooner deviseth a text, than he judges it necessary to attach to his principal subject certain other subordinate one's, suggested not by the sentiment conveyed, but by the expressions used in the text. The consequence is, that there is hardly one sermon in a hundred, wherein that unity of design is observed, which constitutes one great excellence in every composition.*

I mentioned in the beginning of my last prelection, that the first thing that falls under the preacher's consideration is the subject. Unity I then observed was a principal requisite in the subject; but deferred stating the precise notion of it, till we should come to treat of that part of the discourse, which includes the declared design of the performance and the manner in which it is proposed to prosecute it. This will be somewhat different in the different kinds of sermons: I shall consider the unity of each, at least what is peculiar in each, in the explication of the kind. And as to that kind of which we are now treating, the explanatory, let us suppose one intending to compose a sermon in this way hath chosen for his subject, the doctrine of the Divine Omniscience. After searching for some time for a proper text, I suppose he determines to take Heb. iv. 13; which though complex in the terms, is sufficiently simple in the

* In prescribing tasks for trying the abilities of the students of theology, in instructing and persuading, it is the common practice to assign them a text on which to prepare a sermon. And this method I followed for some time. The consequence I found to be, that instead of one subject in a discourse we often heard discussed in one sermon two or three distinct subjects. I have therefore resolved instead of a text to prescribe a subject, leaving to the student to find out a proper text for himself; for example, some doctrine or precept of the gospel to be defined and illustrated in an explanatory sermon, or some duty to be inculcated or evil to be warned against in a suatory discourse. As this way of prescribing a subject gives a greater probability that unity and simplicity shall be preserved in the composition, than that of assigning a text, and as the subject ought always to be first in the intention of the composer, I have thought this method upon the whole greatly preferable.

sentiment. The words are, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight : but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." It is a thousand to one he would judge it no other than a piece of justice to his text, to discuss a number of adventitious points, which, if without any text he had been required to explain the doctrine of the omniscience, he would never have dreamt to have any connection with his subject. Such as these for instance, to consider what is implied in the manifestation of a creature, or in its being naked and opened ; in what respect these phrases may be used relatively, so that a creature may be said to be manifested, naked and opened to the eyes of one, which is nevertheless undiscovered, clothed and shut to the eyes of another : again, who is meant by the apostle in that expression, Him with whom we have to do ; and why God is so denominated. Yet will any one say, that these critical inquiries, (which in a critical exercise on the passage would be very proper,) are I say not, necessary, but any wise conducive to the illustration of this simple proposition, God knoweth all things ? And if so, there can be no unity in the subject, nor simplicity in the performance, in which things so diverse are jumbled together. The only connection there is among them is not a natural, but an accidental, connection arising merely from the terms, in which the sentiment is expressed. Sometimes it is necessary to recur to such texts, because a simpler expression of the sense, though more eligible, is not to be found in the words of scripture. But then if there be any difficulty, it is sufficient to remove it by the way, in showing the import of the text, or in a brief paraphrase on the words, or even in a plain synonymous sentence. It must ever be remembered, that it is the leading sentiment conveyed in the text, which it is the preacher's business to illustrate, and not the terms or phrases by which it is conveyed. It is this difference that makes a principal distinction between every kind of sermons whatever, and that species of lecture which we called exposition, wherein the text is itself properly the subject, and not to be considered as a bare expression of the subject. Now it is this false taste in preaching which hath given rise to the censure formerly quoted from Voltaire, in as much as the speaker is not employed in the discussion of any one subject, but is, as it were, amusing himself and his hearers with a number of little independent dissertations on the different words, idioms and references which are found in a line or two

of sacred writ. It will perhaps be urged, that there are few passages, which from the turn of the expression would lead the speaker into such devious tracts, as that above quoted; but in reality, where the same notion prevails in regard to pulpit composition, there can hardly be found a text so simple, as will not afford some occasion for the same manner of treating the subject. Let us suppose that the preacher's subject is to explain this doctrine of revelation, that the grace of God is the genuine source of man's salvation, and let us suppose he chooseth for his text Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are ye saved." One more simple or more apposite is not even to be conceived. Yet the most general and approved way, in which, in many places, this theme at present would be managed, is the following. First, would the speaker say, I shall explain what is meant by grace; secondly, I shall show what is meant by salvation, or what it is to be saved: thirdly and lastly, the relation which one of these bears to the other, or the dependence of the latter upon the former. Methinks I hear it resound from every quarter, could there be a juster method, or one that more perfectly exhausts the text? No indeed if we are barely to regard the words; in which case it may be said to be three texts more properly than one. My intended subject was only one, but here we have no less than three. Ay but, say you, are not these three so intimately connected, that the one cannot be perfectly understood without the other? That they are indeed connected is very certain, but so also are all the doctrines and precepts of our religion. Is it therefore impossible to explain one without explaining them all? If so, every sermon ought to be a system, both of the tenets and of the duties of Christianity. And as the Christian system is only one, in this way there should be no more but one sermon. And as strange as it may appear, I have known preachers, and very popular preachers too, whom I have heard frequently, and yet can say with truth, I never heard from them but one sermon. The form, the mould into which it was cast, was different according to the different texts, but the matter was altogether the same. You had invariably the preacher's whole system, original sin, the incarnation, the satisfaction, election, imputed righteousness, justification by faith, sanctification by the Spirit, and so forth. As to the practical part, including the duties which our religion requires, whether it was, that it appeared more obvious or of less consequence, I cannot say, but it was very rarely and very slightly touched. The discourses of such people have often put me in mind of the clay, with which children sometimes divert themselves.

The very same mass, they at one time mould into the figure of a man, at another, into that of a beast, at a third into the shape of a bird, and at a fourth, into the appearance of a table or stool. But you are sure of one thing, that whatever be the change on its external form, its substance is unalterably the same. Yet these people argue with an apparent plausibility. Such a one explaining the character expressed in the words *pure in heart*, tells us that in order to understand it rightly we must consider it in its source, the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit. The better to understand this, we ought to consider our previous natural corruption. This brings us directly to original sin, which makes it necessary to inquire into that original righteousness whereof it is the privation. And this being implied in the expression, *image of God*, leads us to the examination of the divine perfections. These again are best illustrated by the effects, the works of creation and providence, and especially the work of redemption. This method of arguing puts me in mind of a story told by Alembert in an essay on the liberty of music. "Dioptrics," said a certain profound philosophical professor to his pupils, "is the science which teaches us the use of spectacles and spy glasses. Now these are of no value without eyes; the eyes are the organs of one of our senses, the existence of our senses supposes the existence of God, since it is God who gave us them; the existence of God is the foundation of the Christian religion—we purpose therefore to evince the truth of the Christian religion, as the first lesson in Dioptrics." I shall only say in general of this method, when introduced into the pulpit, that however acceptable it may be with the many, with whom sound always goes much farther than sense, and favourite words and phrases to which their ears have been accustomed, than the most judicious sentiment, I know no surer method of rendering preaching utterly inefficacious and uninstructional. To attempt every thing is the direct way to effect nothing. If you will go over every part, you must be superficial in every part; you can examine no part to any useful purpose. What would you think of a professor of anatomy, who should run over all the organs and limbs and parts of the human body external and internal in every lecture, and think himself sufficiently excused by saying that there is a connection in all the parts; and that the treating of one naturally led him to say something of another; and so on, till he got through the whole? Or, what would your opinion be of a lecturer in architecture, who in every discourse discussed all the five orders, and did not leave a single member or ornament in any one of them unnam-

ed? From such teachers, could a reasonable man expect to learn any thing but words? The head of the learner would, in consequence of this extraordinary manner of teaching, very quickly be stuffed with technical terms and phrases to which he could affix no definite signification. He might soon be made an accomplished pedant in these arts; but, to the end of the world, would not in this way be rendered a proficient. And do we not see among the common people many such pedants in divinity, who think themselves wonderful scholars, because they have got the knack of uttering, with great volubility, all the favourite phrases and often unmeaning cant of a particular sect or faction? It is indeed solely to be imputed to that jealousy, which party spirit and our unhappy divisions in religious matters have produced, that this futile manner owes its origin. In consequence of this party spirit, many hearers whose minds are unhappily poisoned with its malignity come to a new preacher with an anxious concern, not to be instructed but to be satisfied, whether he is what they call orthodox, is a true partizan and has the shibboleth of the party in him; and the preacher, on the other hand, either because he hath imbibed the same sectarian spirit, or because he is more ambitious to please than to edify, takes this way, which is by far the shortest and the easiest, of ingratiating himself into their favour. But to return to the particular instance which gave rise to these observations, all that in regard to the two points *grace* and *salvation* is previously necessary to the explication of the only point, which makes the subject, is to observe, in so many words, that grace means here the unmerited favour of God, and salvation deliverance from all that evil which is consequent on sin. And this may be sufficiently effected in the exposition of the text, or in a paraphrase upon it. Nay, whatever further is of importance as to both these points, *grace* and *salvation*, will necessarily and more naturally occur, without doing any violence to the unity and simplicity of the discourse, in the illustration of the subject, which is purely to show in what respect divine grace is the genuine source of man's salvation. But would you have only one point? Where is then the distribution or partition of the subject, of which you spoke before? I would indeed have but one subject, though, where the nature of the thing will admit it, distributed for order's and for memory's sake into its different members, and then the several points in the division must appear as the constituent parts of one subject and one whole, and not as so many distinct though related subjects or wholes. Thus the forementioned sub-

ject may be illustrated under these two articles, which will make the heads of discourse : the plan itself of our redemption by the mediation of the Son is the result of grace or unmerited favour ; the completion of it in us by the operation of the Spirit also the result of grace. Both these manifestly centre in the same point ; salvation springs from grace. But if you must draw in every thing that is related you can never have done, till you have made your sermon a complete system of Christian divinity.

The method in making sermons, which for a long time hath carried the vogue in this country over every other, and which is considered as very simple compared with the more laboured and intricate methods formerly in use, is a division of every text, into what the schoolmen call the subject, the predicate and the copula. Thus, suppose the topic to be discussed were the nature of the divine faithfulness, and the text 1 Cor. x. 13. "God is faithful : " this most simple and apposite passage would be divided into three heads. The first would be the divine nature, the second the attribute of faithfulness, and the third the connection between the two. This is not discoursing on the subject, but cutting the text into fritters, where if the subject come in for a share, it is much : often it is eluded altogether. But the impropriety, and if it were not for the commonness, I should say the puerility of this manner will appear better by applying it to other matters, in which the pulpit is not concerned. I shall suppose one hath it prescribed to him as the subject of an oration, an inquiry into the antiquity of rhyme. Accordingly he goes to work, and having well weighed every word and syllable of the question, he thus lays down his plan of operations. First, says he, I shall consider what is implied in the word antiquity, and all the different acceptations of which the term is susceptible ; secondly, I shall consider the nature, import and properties of what is called rhyme ; and thirdly, the relation in which the one stands to the other, or how far and in what respect the one may be justly predicated of the other. Could any one imagine that such a disquisitor understood the subject ? Good people are sometimes offended at the application of the word eloquence to preaching. They think it savours of something merely human and too artificial. But the art of preaching, as in fact it hath been long taught and practised by the men, whom those people generally most admire, is the genuine offspring of the dialectic of the schools, and fifty times more artificial, or if you will mechanical, than that which true rhetoric would inculcate. On the contrary, it is the

business of the latter to bring men back from all scholastic pedantry and jargon, to nature, simplicity and truth. And let me add, that discourses on this plan will be found much more conformable, in manner and composition, to the simple but excellent models to be found in sacred writ.

LECTURE IX.

Of Explanatory Sermons—How the branches should be arranged and treated
—Of the Style—Technical Language to be avoided and that of Scripture preferred—Abuse of Scripture Style—Of the Conclusion.

IN my last discourse on Christian eloquence, I considered part of the explanatory sermon, which was begun with, as the simplest, to wit, the exordium or introduction, the proposing of the design with the explication of the text and context, where such explication is necessary, and the division of the subject. I should now proceed to consider in what method the branches of the division should be ranged, how they should be treated, and the properest way of forming the conclusion. As to the first, *the order* in which the principal heads of a discourse ought to be arranged, this is sometimes of considerable consequence, sometimes it is a matter merely discretionary. It is of consequence, when the knowledge of one part is, in its nature, pre-requisite to the right understanding of another part; it is also of consequence, when in the order of time or of nature, the one part is conceived as preceding the other. The arrangement may be said to be discretionary, when neither of the above mentioned cases takes place. Suppose, for instance, the preacher's subject were the nature of evangelical repentance, and he were disposed to comprehend the whole under the three following heads, a proper sense and conviction of sin, pious and suitable resolutions from an apprehension of divine mercy through the mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord, and a real conversion or change to the obedience of God. The order, in which these topics have just now been mentioned, is the only order in which the subject could properly be discussed. The right understanding of every previous member is preparatory to the right understanding of that which follows. This arrangement will perhaps be considered also as fixed by the order of nature and of time. I shall for another instance

recur to that mentioned in a former lecture. Suppose then the preacher's subject is to illustrate this important evangelical truth, that grace or the unmerited favour of God is the genuine source of man's salvation ; suppose further, that one chooses for the illustration of it the two topics also above mentioned ; the plan of our redemption by Jesus Christ is purely the result of grace or unmerited favour, the completion of this plan in us by the operation of the Spirit is also the result of grace. It is evident, that the order in which these two topics are now laid down, is the only natural order in which they could be treated. The plan is ever conceived as previous to the execution. But in another example of distribution taken from Tillotson, of the characters of gospel obedience into sincerity, universality and constancy, it is not perhaps material in what order you explain these particulars. As there are few cases, however, in which even this circumstance, when attentively considered, will appear perfectly indifferent, I should like best the order wherein I have just now named them, though I could not deny, that in any order they might be treated with sufficient perspicuity. Indeed in the other instance also above mentioned of prayer, as divided into its constituent parts, petition, confession and thanksgiving, the order is perhaps as much discretionary, as in any example that could be produced. Again, as in the explication of the principal heads or topics, there may be scope for a subdivision, the same remarks will hold with regard to the arrangement of the constituent members of that subdivision. But as it is impossible, that one who himself understands the subject that he treats, should not perceive the dependance of the parts and consequently the natural order, where the subject gives scope for it, I should think it losing time to enter more minutely into the discussion of this point. I shall only further remark on the article of arrangement, that as a multiplicity of divisions and subdivisions is not only cumbersome to the memory, but savours too much of artifice and a kind of minute and finical precision, a speaker ought carefully to avoid it. Do not imagine, that by this I mean to recommend a rambling and desultory manner of treating a subject. Nothing can be farther from my intention. I know well the power of method for assisting both the understanding and the memory, and with how much justice Horace hath styled it *lucidus ordo*, (lucid order) as being that, which, of all qualities, tends most to throw light upon a subject. But though a just and natural order ought ever to be preserved in the disposition of the sentiments in a sermon, the formality of always proposing or

laying down that order, especially in the subordinate parts or inferior branches of a discourse, is rarely the most eligible method for recommending what you say to the attention of the hearers.

Need I add, that in general in this kind of discourses the style should be remarkably simple and perspicuous. The immediate end is distinct apprehension. It therefore admits but few ornaments, sometimes indeed it will receive very properly a sort of painting or imagery, which seems more immediately intended to delight the fancy, but which seasonably enough relieves the minds of the hearers from too intense an application of thought, to what in itself may be called a sort of abstract truth, an application, of which the generality of hearers are very little capable ; at the same time that it fixes their attention, and even conveys to them more distinct conceptions by a happy illustration of things less known by things familiar to them. Thus the great truths in relation to the kingdom of heaven were ever illustrated to the people by Him, whom we ought to regard as our pattern in teaching as well as in life and practice, by the common incidents and affairs of this world, with which they had occasion to be well acquainted. I would not, however, by this be understood to recommend so close an imitation of our Lord's manner, as to endeavour to convey every thing in parables and allegories. I am afraid, this might give scope for too close a comparison, which would redound greatly to the disadvantage of any modern speaker ; besides, I must acknowledge that though in what concerns the matter, the great truths of religion remain invariably the same, yet in what regards the general manner of communicating them, the mode or custom of the country where we live, ought not altogether to be overlooked. In a remarkable deviation from it, there is always the disagreeable appearance of affectation. The warmer and livelier manner of the orientals never fails to please us exceedingly in their writings ; at the same time that it appears to sit very awkwardly on a modern European. It suggests the idea rather of mimicry, or a servile copying, than of a liberal imitation. Certain things in the manner of conveying instruction, as well as the words and phrases of the language that we employ, are in every age and nation dependent upon use, from which we cannot deviate far without becoming ridiculous. But there is sufficient scope for imitating the manner of our Lord, by a proper choice of similes and examples borrowed from things human, for assisting the apprehension of the people in things divine.

In regard to the manner of treating the different branches of the subject, I shall only further add, that if there occur, on any of them, any difficulty arising either from the nature of the point to be discussed, or from misconceptions of the subject commonly entertained, or from any customary but wrong way of explaining it, such difficulties will generally be best obviated in the entry ; I say, generally, because sometimes a simple and distinct explanation will make the difficulty entirely vanish, and at most it will require only one's remarking, as it were by the way, the misrepresentation that has been given, or the misconception that has been entertained of such a part of the subject. Let it serve also as a general rule in this kind of discourses, to avoid too great subtlety and depth in your explanations. The many controversies that have arisen in the Christian church, and the parties and factions into which Christendom is unhappily divided, have amongst all of them, in less or more, given rise to a scholastic manner of treating almost every question in divinity, a manner extremely unsuitable to the simplicity of the sacred idiom, and the purpose of edifying a Christian congregation. The same thing has also given rise to a sort of technical language in those matters, which is somewhat different, indeed, in every different sect, and too much savouring in all of the cobweb distinctions of schoolmen and metaphysicians, but very little of the wisdom which is from above. It is this which hath made preaching in many places degenerate into what the apostle terms, "doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth." I have often recommended, and can scarce sufficiently inculcate on all students in theology, to be more conversant with their Bible, than with the writings of any of the most celebrated divines, to whatever sect or party they belong, and to familiarize themselves to the style and sentiments of the former much more than to those of the latter. I am far from thinking, that we ought to reject the use of the latter altogether ; but am clearly of opinion that the more assiduous and unintermitted study of the former should give an ascendent in our minds to the sentiments, to the turn of thinking, and even to the forms of expression when we learn them, and should serve as a proper check, to prevent our imbibing and adopting too implicitly, either in tenets or in style, the peculiarities of a sect.

Before I leave this article, I would also warn you against another fault, which is sometimes to be met with, and that is, using the scripture style itself in an unmeaning manner. There are, especially in the prophets, it must be acknowledged, several passages, about the sense of which the most learned and judicious interpreters are divided; there are many more expressions, which are not intelligible at least to the common people; and even of many, that are quite perspicuous when considered as standing in connection with the context, such applications are often made, as convey either no meaning at all, or a very different meaning from that which is suggested by the same words as they are situated in scripture. This is turning the language of the Spirit itself, if not to a bad use, at least into mere cant and jargon, a practice exceedingly common in the theological writings of the last century intended for the use of the people, but not so often to be met with in the present age; except amongst a few, on whom the dregs of the fanaticism, conceited ignorance and factious spirit of the former seem entirely to have settled. The true origin of this abuse is an excessive tendency to the use of scripture phraseology, merely in the way of allusion. Let it be observed, that I do by no means condemn in the gross an allusive application of scripture phrases, when clear, when apposite, and when emphatical, as they often are, although we be sensible that the meaning, in which we employ them, does not coincide with that which they have in the sacred volume. Where they are not quoted in the way of proof, but manifestly adopted in the way of illustration, they produce nearly the effect of similitude, containing an implicit comparison between the event to which they originally referred, and that to which they are applied by the preacher. Besides, this method of applying, by way of allusion, passages of the Old Testament we find also frequently adopted by the writers of the New. Such an use, therefore, we must declare in general, is not only allowable, but often energetic. It requires, however, to be managed with the utmost discretion. *Corruptio optimi pessima* (a corruption of the best thing is the worst sort of corruption) is even grown into a proverb.

There are two dangers, in particular, which here ought to be carefully guarded against. One is, that whilst we mean only to make an allusive application, we may not express ourselves in such a manner, as might seem to fix a sense on holy writ different from that of the inspired penmen. The other is, that we do not run into the obscure and enigmatic style, as is sometimes done through an

excessive inclination to hunt after scripture phrases, tropes and figures, or after figurative applications of what perhaps was sufficiently plain in the literal and original use. Nothing can be more opposite to the nature and intention of the explanatory discourse than such a method. For however emphatical a clear and apposite allusion may be, nothing can have a worse effect, when the resemblance is but faint and scarcely discernible, for then the way of applying the sacred words inevitably appears, to the more judicious hearers, affected and far-fetched; and though the imaginations of the more ignorant may be pleased, and their ears as it were tickled by the use of phrases, for which through habit they have acquired a veneration, their understandings are not at all enlightened. On the contrary, the subject, (though they may not be sensible of it; for those of this class are very prone to mistake words for things, and mere sound for sense) is more veiled and darkened to them, than it was before. A preacher who is ever on the scent (and such preachers I have sometimes heard) for allusive scripture phrases, can express nothing in a simple, natural and perspicuous manner. He will exhibit to you the mental blindness of the unregenerate, by telling you, that they "see men as trees walking;" spiritual and temporal mercies he rarely fails to denominate, "the blessings of the upper and the nether springs;" in order to denote the assurance, which the church or Christian community have of a triumph over all their enemies, he will tell us, "The shout of a king is among them, and he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn;" and to express I know not what, (but I have myself heard the phrase adopted by preachers of this stamp) he tells us very pompously, "The king's goings are always to be seen in the sanctuary." Nay, what is worse, (but I remark it here only by the way) sometimes dark and indefinite expressions, like these, are converted into petitions and adopted in public prayer. Such will say, "may the shout of a king be amongst us; may his goings be seen in the sanctuary;" and many other such indefinite and dark expressions one has sometimes occasion to hear, where they are exceedingly unsuitable, in the public devotions; for though the speaker may himself affix some meaning to them, it is impossible they should be understood or applied aright by the much greater part of the audience. With respect to them, therefore, he acts much the same part, as if he prayed in an unknown tongue. So much for the manner and the style in which the doctrines and the duties of our religion ought to be explained to the people. I shall only add

upon the whole of this branch of the subject, as a general position that will never fail to hold, that the surest expedient, that any person can devise, for preventing his explanation of his subject from being unintelligible to the hearers, is to be careful, in the first place, that he distinctly understand it himself. It was well said by a master in this valuable art, "*Si rem potenter conceperis, nec animus, nec facundia in concione defutura sunt;*"* or in the words of Jerom, "*Quia firmiter concepimus bene loquimur,*" (we speak well, because we have firmly grasped the subject.") We may safely pronounce, that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, where we find, in any writing, the thoughts to be darkly and confusedly expressed, the true reason has been, the dark and confused conceptions of the author. One ought, therefore, before all things, to endeavour to be master of the subject which he explains, to range his thoughts properly and naturally, to have a distinct meaning to every expression that he uses, and to employ only such as he has reason to believe will be generally intelligible.

It remains only now, that in this species of discourse we consider the *conclusion*. And here, if not always, it will very generally be proper, to begin with a brief recapitulation of the articles discussed. This is of importance both for the better understanding of the subject, and for fixing it more firmly in the memory, and is almost indispensable when the subject happens to be complex. But this is the smallest and the easiest part of what in such discourses should constitute the conclusion. As in religion, the ultimate end both of knowledge and faith is practice, or, in other words, the real improvement of the heart and life, so every doctrine whatever is of use, either as a direction in the performance of duty, or as a motive to it. And the knowledge and belief of hearers are no farther salutary to them, than this great end is reached. On the contrary, where it is not reached, where the heart is not bettered and the life reformed, they prove only the means of aggravating their guilt and heightening their condemnation. The doctrines of the unity and spirituality of the Godhead serve to point out the proper object of religious worship, and the nature of that worship which must be acceptable to God. The other doctrines concerning the divine attributes serve both for our direction in regard to the adoration and homage which we owe to Him, and also as motives to the duties of

* If you thoroughly understand a subject, there will be no want of suitable expressions.

reverence, trust, love and obedience. The scripture doctrine, in regard to the positive institutions of religion, serves chiefly to direct us as to the manner and disposition in which these institutions ought to be celebrated. The other doctrines of Christianity are manifestly intended to be used, and are employed by the sacred writers as motives to a pious and Christian life. How strongly does the doctrine of the mediation enforce the calls given in scripture to sinners to repentance? How powerfully does the doctrine of the influences of the Holy Spirit, rightly understood, tend both to excite us to assiduity and fervour in our devotions, and to animate our endeavours after moral perfection in the persuasion of this almighty aid? Need I suggest the practical use to which the doctrines of the resurrection, of the future judgment, of the final retribution, of heaven, hell and eternity so manifestly point? Nor can any thing appear more proper and natural, than such a manner of ending a discourse which, as to the substance of it, was addressed purely to the understanding of the hearers; in as much as it is incontrovertible, that the revelation of these important truths delivered in the gospel was never intended to terminate in being understood and assented to, but in having a happy influence on the disposition of mind and whole behaviour. It was not given to gratify our curiosity, but to regulate our lives. Hence it is, that we find it so frequently in scripture joined with epithets and attributes expressive of this quality, a *most holy faith*, a *doctrine according to godliness*, and *sound doctrine*, *υγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία* *wholesome instruction*, not (as the expression has been sometimes perverted by the bigoted retainers to a party) a precise conformity in phraseology and opinion to all the little captious particularities of the sect. It is impossible to conceive any thing more remote from the original signification of the word, *sound*. It is a term, which marks not the logical justness of a theory, but its beneficial tendency; it is not the truth of any notion which can denominate it sound, but the salutary influence it hath on human life, that which makes it serve as food and medicine to the soul. Whatever in divinity is void of such influence, like the far greater number of the metaphysical questions agitated among controvertists, whether true or false, is hollow and unsound, a barren insignificant speculation: whatever hath an opposite influence, (and such doctrines also have been broached) and tends to subvert the foundation of mutual love and obligations to the practice of virtue, is more properly termed poisonous. Nay the pure unadulterated tenets of the gospel have so direct and manifest

attendency to enforce sanctity of life and manners, that when any of them are treated of by the inspired writers of the New Testament, the subject is almost invariably concluded by such a practical application. Thus the apostle Peter, (2 Peter iii.) after treating of the general conflagration, very naturally concludes, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness;" and after taking notice of the new heavens and new earth, that shall succeed the present, he adds, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless." In like manner, the apostle Paul, after treating at some length of the resurrection, concludes the whole with this earnest exhortation, (1 Cor. xv. 58.) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." It is almost only this part, which in explanatory discourses admits of warmth, and what may be called an address to the affections. A deep sense in the preacher of the importance of this improvement of every instruction which he gives, an affectionate desire of promoting the good of the people, and a zeal for the interests of religion and virtue are the only sure methods I know of, for qualifying him to address them suitably and efficaciously.

LECTURE X.

Of Controversial Discourses—Candour and Simplicity ever to be studied in the Defence of Truth.

I HAVE now finished the consideration of the explanatory sermon, which is of all the kinds mentioned the simplest, and approaches nearest to what in the primitive church was called *homily*. The end of it, as was observed, is to dispel ignorance and to communicate knowledge, and for this purpose it addresses the understanding of the hearers. The next in order is the *controversial*, addressed also to the understanding, its end being to conquer doubt and error, and to produce belief. In other words, by the first it is proposed to inform the hearers, by the second to convince them. It is the second kind, which I now intend to consider, and shall en-

deavour to despatch, what I have to offer upon it in the present lecture. There are many observations, such as those regarding the unity of the subject, the choice of a text, the topics proper for the exordium, the explication of text and context, where necessary, which hold equally in all the kinds, and therefore need not be repeated in the examination of each different kind.

In regard to the *unity* of the subject, I shall only observe, that here it admits rather a clearer definition or description, than perhaps in any of the others. A controversial sermon is then strictly one, when there is only one thesis, as I may call it, that is, one proposition, whether affirmative or negative, the truth of which it is the scope of the whole discourse to evince. Suppose a preacher should (in order to guard his people against some apparent danger of seduction; for, without some special reason of this sort controversy is not eligible in the pulpit,) judge it necessary to maintain the lawfulness of infant-baptism; that which would constitute his performance *one*, is, that the aim of the whole, and of every part, should unite in supporting this position, that it is agreeable to the gospel dispensation, that infants should be baptized. The thing might be illustrated by a thousand other examples; but it is really so plain in itself, that I could not consider it, as any other, than losing time to produce more instances.

In regard to the *text*, the same qualities are required here as in the former species, namely appositeness, simplicity and perspicuity. In regard to the first of these, the appositeness, let it be remarked here by the way, that it is not possible to find, on every subject, a text that has this quality in an equal degree. On some articles the declarations of scripture are more explicit and direct; on others, not less certain even from scripture, the evidences at least in regard to the mode of expression are more implicit and indirect. I may observe also that we are not to understand this quality of *apposite* so strictly, as to suppose, that by the text we should discover whether the intended sermon is to be explanatory or controversial. This is hardly ever to be expected. The text John iv. 24, "God is a spirit," is simple, perspicuous and apposite, either for an explanatory discourse on the nature of the Divine spirituality, or for a controversial discourse, whose aim is to evince the spirituality of God. Nay, in a course of preaching on points, which may be controverted, this method, especially by a pastor in his own parish, is sometimes not improperly adopted. His division of the subject accordingly, when he first enters on it, may be this, first to explain the

doctrine of his text whatever it be; secondly, to evince the truth of that doctrine. As, however, the tenour of these two different parts, from the nature of the composition fitted to each, is very different, it is commonly better to disjoin them, so far as to make separate discourses of them, though from the same passage of sacred writ, the explanation being the subject of the first, and the proof of the subject of that which immediately succeeds the other. But when the explanatory part may with sufficient distinctness be despatched in a few sentences, I should admit that both parts may conveniently enough, and without violating the unity of design, be comprised in the same discourse. Something extremely similar we find to have taken place sometimes in the judiciary pleadings of the ancients, which I observed to have an analogy, in point of form, to controversial sermons. When the law was either obscure or complex, a separate explanation of the statute was made to precede the arguments either for, or against the accused. And we can easily perceive the expediency of this method for throwing light upon the proof, and assisting the hearers in discerning the justness of the reasoning. A similar manner we find recommended by the example of some of the best preachers, both in French and in English.

In the controversial sermon after the exordium, and brief explanation of the text and context where necessary; the point of doctrine to be either supported or refuted, ought to be as distinctly, perspicuously and briefly as possible proposed, and then the method ought to be laid down in which you intend to manage the argument. This method on different questions will be very different. When a controverted point is simple in its nature, and when there is only one opposing sentiment, which the preacher has to refute, the most common, and indeed the most natural method he can take will be, first, to refute the arguments of the adversary; and secondly, to support his own doctrine by proper proofs. On the first, his acquaintance with the adversary's plea must serve for a directory as to the method wherein he should proceed. Only let it be observed in general, that where one means honestly to defend truth and to detect error, he will ever find his account in employing the most plain and unequivocal expressions, and in exposing the ambiguities and indefinite terms, in which, it often happens, that the sophistry of the adverse party lies concealed. Some of our theological disputes, and even some of those which have created the greatest ferments and most lasting animosities among Christians, are merely verbal. These, as much as possible, ought to be avoided. Others, in which there is a real difference in opinion, as well as in expression, in the different sides,

have nevertheless given rise to a deal of logomachy in the manner wherein they have been managed. In most questions, what is of real weight in the way of argument on the opposite sides might be reduced to a very small compass. It will well become the assertor of truth, whose cause has the greater advantage, the stronger the light be, into which he brings it, to endeavour, by clearing off the rubbish of mere cavils, ambiguous and indefinite words and phrases, to convey plain and determinate ideas to the hearers, and thus as much as possible to simplify the question. Then let him discuss severally, what is thought to be of most moment on the adverse side, avoiding to tire his hearers with too curious a minuteness of investigation, or to perplex himself with a needless multiplicity of topics. Another error in disputation, which is by far too common, is, when one will admit nothing in the plea or arguments of an adversary to be of the smallest weight. That they have no weight may be the case sometimes, but it is not always so. And this extreme will ever, with the more judicious, savour either of blind zeal in the preacher, or of a total want of candour, which will rather create a prejudice against the speaker, in the minds of those who are intelligent and sensible, that he does not justice to the other side, than incline them to give a favourable reception to his arguments. It gives, besides, an appearance to the debate which savours much more of proceeding from a mind ambitious of the glory of victory, than concerned for the interests of truth. I have heard a disputant of this stamp, in defiance of etymology and use, maintain that the word rendered in the New Testament *baptize*, means more properly to sprinkle than to plunge, and, in defiance of all antiquity, that the former method was the earliest, and, for many centuries, the most general practice in baptizing. One, who argues in this manner, never fails, with persons of knowledge, to betray the cause he would defend; and though with respect to the vulgar, bold assertions generally succeed, as well as arguments, sometimes better; yet a candid mind will disdain to take the help of a falsehood, even in support of the truth.

After discussing the adversary's plea, it will be proper in the second place to enter on the proofs. If the point under examination, is knowable by the light of nature, as if it regard the being and perfections of God, or the great obligations of morality, one topic of argument may not improperly be taken from the discoveries of natural reason, and on some points, like that of a future state of retribution, even the universal consent of mankind, and the earliest tradi-

tions, that have as yet been traced in any country, may not implausibly be pleaded. Sometimes ecclesiastical history will furnish a head of argument. This happens especially when the question relates to any usages or ceremonies that have obtained, or to the manner of celebrating any of the positive institutions. But the principal foundation of argument for the preacher will always be the sacred scripture. This is true whatever be the controverted doctrine, since in order to entitle it to a discussion from the pulpit, it ought to be a doctrine in which the faith or morals of a Christian are concerned. If the tenet maintained be purely a point of revelation, the scripture is in a manner the preacher's only ground, on which his reasonings can be built. From this also different topics of argument may be raised, either from different passages, or from the different lights in which it is in holy writ exhibited, as suits the nature of the subject.

In arguing from the divine oracles, great care ought to be taken that we quote and interpret them candidly ; in other words, that we give always what, according to the best of our judgment, is the real sense of the sacred author. Preachers, I know, will sometimes make a very plausible appearance of supporting their side of the question by a passage of scripture, which in the detached way wherein they quote it, appears very favourable, but which, taken in connection with its context, means something totally distinct. For my own part, were the doctrine meant to be defended ever so truly a scriptural doctrine, I could not approve an attempt to support it by such a misapplication of holy writ, and consequently by misleading the hearers in regard to the sense of particular portions of scripture. This is like bringing people to submission to magistracy, by perverting the sense of the law ; and though a person may be fighting in a good cause, one, who takes this method, fights with illicit weapons. If it be safer to be under God's direction, than under any man's, it must be safer to exhibit to the people the sense of the sacred oracles purely and candidly, leaving it to them to form the conclusions and make the application. This I take to be preaching not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves the people's servants for Jesus's sake. The contrary method is indeed preaching ourselves, it is abounding in our own sense, and even wresting the word of Christ to render it subservient to our opinions. I would not by any means, however, be understood to pass so severe a censure on the misapplication of a passage of scripture arising from a mistake of the sense, a thing to which the wisest and the

best are liable, but only on an intended misrepresentation of the true meaning, in order to make it serve as evidence of a point we are maintaining. That I may be better understood in the aim of this remark, I shall produce an example in the way of illustration. In support of this doctrine, that whatever is done by unbelievers, even those actions which are commonly accounted most laudable and virtuous, are of the nature of sin; it has been sometimes very gravely and very confidently urged, that the apostle says expressly (Rom. xiv. 23) "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Yet this expression (however apposite it may appear, when cut off from the passage with which it stands connected) has not the remotest relation to that famous question. When recourse is had to the apostle himself, and the occasion of the affirmation, we find it is brought in the conclusion of his reasoning, in regard to a point much disputed in that early age of the church, the observance of a distinction in meats and days. And though the apostle explicitly declares his own conviction, that no kind of meat is in a religious view unclean of itself, yet he is equally clear, that to him who esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean, because he believes it to be so. Hence he justly concludes, that he who doubteth is liable to condemnation, if he eat; because he acts against the dictates of his conscience, even though a misinformed conscience, he himself not believing that he does right, "for," he adds, "whatever is not of faith is sin;" whatever action is not accompanied with a belief of its lawfulness, is so far criminal, as it shows in him, who commits it, a presumptuous disposition to violate the rights of conscience. But this has not the least reference to the belief of the principles, tenets, or doctrines of Christianity, but merely of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of certain actions. It deserves also to be remarked, that, in the matter discussed by the apostle, it is of no consequence, for rendering the action virtuous or vicious, whether the things believed be true or false; but barely that they be believed, and that our practice be conformable to our belief. To act against conviction or belief, he tells us, is a sin, to forbear acting in such a case is a duty, even though the thing believed be a falsehood. Nay it is, in fact, against what he himself acknowledgeth to be an erroneous faith, that he declares the man justly condemnable who acts. Now when such a perversion of the sacred text, as I have been illustrating, is made knowingly by the speaker against his better judgment, it is without doubt what the apostle calls "handling the word of God deceitfully," even though the sentiment, in support of

which it is produced, be a true sentiment, and conformable to the doctrine of Holy Writ. There is a candour and simplicity, which ought ever to attend the ministry of religion, not only in regard to the ends pursued, but in regard to the means employed for the attainment of the ends. Castalio in the defence of his Latin translation of the Bible against Beza, who had attacked him with a virulence which savours too much of what, not greatly to the honour of polemic divinity, has been called the *odium theologicum* (theological hatred,) amongst other things mentions an accusation, for translating the third verse of the first chapter of Genesis in this manner, “Jussit Deus ut existeret lux et extitit lux, God commanded that light should be, and light was.” And the reason of Beza’s animadversion is, that in his opinion, Castalio had, by so doing, suppressed an important argument for the trinity. “Moses,” says Beza, “purposely used the verb *amar*, said, that he might indicate another person in the Godhead distinct from the person of the Father, and from the person of the Holy Ghost, namely, the Son of God, by whom the whole series of creation was enunciated. The evangelist John, taking occasion hence, calls him *λογος* the word, and proves him to be God, and to have been in the beginning with God. But this man, (meaning Castalio) excluding the verb *said*, in which the greatest moment and principal weight is placed, expresses only in his version the signification of the verb *ihī*, *fiat*.” Thus far Beza; in which remark, if he was sincere, as we are bound in charity to believe, it is impossible, whatever his erudition and other talents might be, to think otherwise than meanly of his skill in criticism. I own at the same time that I like the common translation, *Dixit Deus, Fiat lux, et facta est lux*, (God said, Let there be light, and there was light) much better than Castalio’s, and that, not indeed for Beza’s reason, which is no reason at all, but merely, because it is more conformable to the simplicity and dignity of the original. Castalio’s answer to the above charge, though it would perhaps be thought too ludicrous for the seriousness of the subject, justly exposes the absurdity of his antagonist. “*Hæc sunt illius verba, quibus nihilo aptius argumentatur, quam si quis ita dicat; Moses in illis verbis, Dixit serpens femina, cur vobis dixit Deus, &c. data opera usus est verbo amar, dixit, ut alteram in diabolo personam distinctam a persona patris, et a persona spiritus impuri, nempe filium diaboli insigniret; nam certe simillima est locutio.** He subjoins this sentiment, in which every

* He argues with no more propriety than if one should say, Moses, in these words, ‘*The serpent said to the woman, Hath God said,*’ &c. purposely em-

lover of truth will cordially agree with him. “Ego veritatem velim veris argumentis defendi, non ita ridiculis, quibus deridenda propinetur adversariis.* How much more modest, in this respect, was Calvin, whose zeal for the doctrine will not be questioned, than either Beza or Luther? This last had exclaimed with great vehemence against both Jews and antitrinitarians, for not admitting that in these words, in the first verse of Genesis, *God created, bara Elohim*, there is contained a proof of the trinity, because the noun, signifying *God*, in the Hebrew has a plural form, though joined to a verb in the singular. Calvin on the contrary refutes this argument, or quibble rather, at some length, and adds judiciously, speaking of this expression, “Monendi sunt lectores ut sibi a violentis ejusmodi glossis caveant.” (Readers should be on their guard against such forced glosses.) I remember once to have heard a sort of lecture, on the miraculous cure of Bartimeus’s blindness from perhaps the most popular preacher, I cannot add the most judicious, that has appeared in this island in the present century. From these words of the blind man, addressed to Jesus, who had asked him, what he would have done for him? “Lord, that I may receive my sight,” the preacher inferred not only the divinity of Jesus Christ, but Bartimeus’s faith in this article. “He could not,” said he, “have given him the appellation *Lord Κυριε*, had he not believed him to be God.” And yet Mary gave the same appellation *Κυριε* to Jesus, when she took him for no higher person than a gardener. The same appellation was given by the jailer to Paul and Silas, the prisoners under his care, *Κυριοι*. In the first of these places our translators have rightly rendered it *Sir*—in the second, *Sirs*. Indeed it is notorious, that both in the Greek version of the Old Testament and in the New, the word like *Dominus* in Latin, or *Signore*, in Italian, is applied indiscriminately, as a term of respect to God or to man. I own I could not help concluding in my own mind from the remark, Either you must be exceedingly ignorant in regard to the book you pretend to explain, or you treat sacred writ with a freedom and artifice, that suit better the subtlety of the Jesuit, than the sincerity of the Christian divine. If a man wanted to render

ployed the word *amar*, said, that he might point out another person in the devil distinct from the person of the father and from the person of the unclean spirit, namely, the son of the devil. For certainly the form of expression is very similar.

* I wish the truth to be defended with sound arguments; not with such ridiculous ones as will bring it into contempt with adversaries.

truth suspicious to people of discernment, I know no better way he could take, than to recur to such cavils in order to support it.

But to return to the method of treating the proofs, from which, I am afraid, I shall be thought to have digressed too long. I observed on entering on this article, that when the controversy is reducible to one simple point, and when there is only one opposing sentiment to be refuted, the preacher might make the refutation of objections the first head of discourse, and the defence of the doctrine proposed the second. And if nothing can be said, in refutation, but what will naturally find a place in treating his argument, there is no necessity that the discourse should be divided into separate heads. One conclusive argument in many cases, is as good as a great number; for every part does not admit variety. Nor ought a division into different heads to be considered as a thing indispensable. Sometimes indeed when there is but one argument, it will very properly admit a division, as the conclusion rests on two propositions called premises; when neither of these can be said to be self-evident, it may be made the subject of the first head, to support one of the premises, and of the second, to support the other. I shall borrow an instance from a late attempt of my own in this way, as no other at present occurs to my memory. The design was to evince the divinity of our religion from the success of its first publishers. The argument stood thus. "First, the natural means originally employed in propagating the gospel were utterly inadequate, and must have proved ineffectual, if unaccompanied with the divine interposition. Secondly, the means employed were however, eminently effectual beyond all example before or since. Consequently they were accompanied with a divine interposition, and our religion is of God." But every argument does not admit this division; for often one of the premises is either self-evident, or which amounts to the same, received by those against whom we argue. On the contrary, when the subject is complex and the opinions of the adversaries various, it will be better not to make a separate head of refutation, for where there are many jarring sentiments to be set aside there is a danger of distracting the mind by multiplicity. Let the truth be defended by arguments distinctly explained, and enforced, and in doing this, especially when the topics are drawn from holy writ, occasion may be taken of refuting the contradictory glosses or expositions of the opponents as you proceed. In this the preacher ought to consult carefully, what will give most simplicity and perspicuity to his reasoning. Further, a

question is sometimes capable of being divided into two, or more, distinct though intimately related questions. In that case the heads of discourse may be the examination of each. When the arguments are numerous, it is better to class them under a few general heads or topics for the sake of memory, as those from reason, those from scripture, and the like.

As to the arrangement of the arguments, there may sometimes be in them a natural order, as when a right apprehension of one is previously necessary to the full conception of another. When they are not of this kind, the speaker ought to consider the disposition of his hearers. If their prejudices rather oppose his doctrine, he would need to begin with what he thinks will have the greatest weight with them, lest otherwise, by introducing the debate with what they shall think frivolous, he should disgust them in the entry, and avert their attention from what he has further to offer. In general, rhetoricians have recommended to begin and end with the strongest arguments, and throw the weakest into the middle. It is as important, that you should leave a good impression on their minds in ending the debate, as that you should bespeak their favourable attention by what is of consequence in the beginning. They would have the orator act, in this respect, like the experienced commander, who puts his weakest troops into the middle; for though he has not the same dependance on them, as on those in the front and the rear, he knows they are of some use by their number, and add to the formidable appearance of his army.

The *conclusion* here may very properly be introduced by an abstract or recapitulation of the argument, followed with a suitable improvement of the doctrine proved. There does not seem to be any material difference, in what constitutes a fit conclusion to an explanatory discourse, from what would suit a controversial one. Doctrine is the general subject of both discourses. In the one it is explained, in the other it is proved. The direct aim of the first is knowledge, but then the conviction or belief is taken for granted. The direct aim of the second is conviction. In both, the proper application is the influence which the knowledge and belief of such a truth ought to have on our dispositions, and on our practice. Perhaps in the conclusion of controversial discussions, it might not be amiss to offer some observations with a view to moderate the unchristian animosities, which differences on these articles sometimes occasion among those, who all profess themselves to be the disciples of the same Master, and to shew in general that error is more properly a ground of pity than of indignation.

LECTURE XI.

Of Commendatory Discourses, or those addressed to the Imagination.

WE have now discussed the discourses addressed to the understanding, those two especially, the explanatory, whose end is information, by dispelling ignorance, and the controversial, whose end is conviction, by vanquishing doubt or error. I come now to that species which is addressed to the imagination. For as one way, and indeed a very powerful way, of recommending religion is by example, it must be conducive to the general end of preaching above mentioned, to make it sometimes the scope of a sermon, to exhibit properly any known good character of a person now deceased by giving a lively narrative of his life, or of any signal period of his life, or an account of any particular virtue, as illustrated through the different periods of his life. For performances of this kind, the history of our Lord affords the richest fund of matter. In like manner, the lives of the saints recorded in scripture, the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles and the martyrs, such at least with which, from the accounts given in holy writ, we have it in our power to be acquainted, make very proper subjects. Add to these, deceased persons eminent for virtue and piety, whose characters are well known to the people addressed. Panegyrics of this kind on departed friends were more in use formerly, and commonly distinguished by the name of funeral orations. As praise of this kind was however sometimes prostituted, and as the usage itself in certain circumstances exposed the preacher to the temptation of making a sacrifice of truth from motives of interest, it is perhaps, upon the whole, no disadvantage to the ministerial character, that the practice is, in this country, almost entirely laid aside, and that we are now very much confined in this respect to the examples which the sacred canon presents us with. Now to do justice to the respectable qualities and worthy actions of the good, is to present the audience with a beautiful and animated pattern of Christian excellence, which, by operating on their admiration and love, raiseth in their minds a pious emulation. That we are, without attending to it, induced to imitate what we admire and love, will not admit a question. It might not want its use, though scripture hath not afforded here so large foundation or so ample materials, to delineate sometimes, in proper colours, the conduct of the vicious, with its natural consequences, in order to excite a proper

degree of horror and detestation against vice. But this, it must be owned, would require to be handled still more tenderly. It is our duty to love and esteem the virtuous, but not to hate and abhor the vicious. Our hatred and abhorrence ought to be pointed only against vice, but not against the persons addicted to it; whom, in pity, we ought rather to study to reclaim. And though the individuals themselves should be dead, and consequently in this respect beyond our power, whatever bears the odious appearance of calumny and personal invective is quite unbecoming the pulpit. Exhibitions in either way from the pulpit form that species of discourses, which falls under the third class above enumerated. They are addressed to the fancy, and their scope is to promote piety and virtue by insinuation, that is, by the gentle but efficacious influence of example. Discourses of this kind were distinguished among the ancients by the name *demonstrative*; but as that word in our language is rather equivocal, I have chosen to denominate them, *commendatory*, from the purpose to which they are most commonly applied.

In regard to the choice of a *text*, as there is here sometimes greater difficulty of uniting all the qualities, which were formerly mentioned, as characteristical of a proper text, greater indulgence must be given. At any rate, let it be perspicuous and expressive of the happiness or amiableness of a well spent life, or of those virtues which the discourse itself will give principal scope for extolling. An appositeness to the individual person, who is the subject of the sermon, when it is a funeral oration, cannot be had, and therefore, an appositeness to the character is all that can be sought. When the person, who is the subject, is one of the scripture saints, it is better to choose for a text some passage, wherein he in particular is spoken of. As to the introduction or *exordium*, there does not seem to be any thing very special requisite in this kind. The common qualities that ought to affect introductions in general have equally place here. They should be calculated to render the hearers attentive, docile and benevolent.

With regard to the *explanation of the text and context*, unless they could in some way contribute to the illustration of the character, which is the subject of the eulogy, it were better not to attempt it. If the text be sufficiently perspicuous and apposite, there can be no necessity; and there is no sort of discourse to which any thing, that has the remotest appearance of verbal criticism is worse

adapted than to this. The design of the sermon should be proposed with simplicity and distinctness. One may add the mention of the method, in which it may be thought proper to prosecute the subject, unless it shall appear to be so simple and natural, as to render even the bare intimation of it superfluous.

As to the *method* in which the different parts should be *digested and arranged*, that may be different as suits the particular taste and talents of the speaker, or as suits best the materials he hath to work upon. All the methods that occur to me for treating subjects of this kind, may be reduced to the three following. First, the order of time may be followed. This method I shall call the *historical*. If this be the disposition adopted, there can be no question as to what should precede and what should succeed in the discourse. If there be much ground to go upon, it may not be amiss, for the ease of the memory, to divide the life you are to recommend as a pattern, into certain distinct periods, proposing to consider each severally in its order. If the materials you are supplied with for this purpose are not very plentiful, or if, whatever has been remarkable in the person's life which can be of any service to you, is comprised within a narrow compass of time, it will be better to follow the natural order, without using the formality of proposing it to the hearers, or dividing the discourse into separate heads, for this ought never to be considered as absolutely necessary. The *second* method of arrangement is, by considering separately the most eminent virtues displayed in the life you propose to recommend to the admiration of your hearers. This I shall call the *logical* method. Suppose the subject, for example, were the life of Jesus Christ, and one were inclined to divide the virtues thereby illustrated into three classes, those which have self for the immediate object, those which have other men, and those which have God. The greatest objection I know of, that lies against this method, is, that it generally occasions frequent recurring to the same actions and events, in which different virtues may have been illustrated. This, unless managed very dexterously, will have the appearance of tiresome repetitions. But to return to the example given of the life of Christ. Each of the heads above named may be illustrated through all the different periods of his life, or they may be subdivided into inferior branches. For example, the first of these, the duties a man owes to himself, may be understood to imply the virtues of humility, temperance and fortitude; humility or a superiority to pride and vanity; temperance or a superiority to appetite; and fortitude or a superiority to fear. But

such subdivisions are not often convenient, in as much as they commonly tend more to burden than to assist the memory. If the preacher were to make one of the general heads only, the whole subject of one discourse such a division of that head would be very proper. But if the whole example of Christ is the subject of a single discourse, the case is very different. Subdivisions for the greater part ought to be avoided. The sort of discourse, to which they seem most adapted, is the explanatory, whose principal excellence appears to be in perspicuity and precision. Let it be observed, however, that the method implied in a subdivision may often be conveniently followed, when it is not in so many words proposed. A *third* method, that may be employed in panegyrical discourses, as when two or three memorable events or actions are the sole fund, from which all the materials employed by the encomiast must be derived, is to illustrate the virtues displayed in the person's conduct, on these several occasions, as the separate heads of discourse. And this method may, for distinction's sake, be denominated, the *dramatical*. As to the manner of prosecuting the design through all its different branches, I do not intend to enter into particulars. It is not my purpose to give a full institute of eloquence, but only to apply to the pulpit, as far as they are applicable, the general rules laid down by the ancients, referring you to their writings for the illustration, and particularly to remark to you the differences which the very different nature of the subject, of the occasion, of the end, of the character, to be supported by the speaker, and of the character of the audience, should give rise to. Now it must be acknowledged, that no sort of discourse from the pulpit hath so close a resemblance in respect both of the subject and of the end, and sometimes also of the occasion, to the judicial and deliberative orations, as this sort of encomiums hath to the demonstrative orations of the ancients. To their institutes, therefore, I must refer you for more particular information. It is not my intention by these lectures to supersede the study of ancient critics and orators, but only to assist you in applying their rules and examples to cases so different from those with which alone they were concerned. I shall, therefore, in these discourses, insist chiefly on what is different and peculiar in the eloquence of the pulpit.

And here, one of the first differences that offers itself to our observation, is, that the ancients had a much wider range in what might properly be made the subject of their praises. Pedigree, intellectual abilities, even qualities merely corporeal, such as beauty,

health, strength, agility, nay those commonly called the goods of fortune, as riches, friends, rank, all came in for a share in the encomium. I do not deny that any of these may passingly be mentioned in a sermon, but it would ill become the dignity of the sacred function, to enlarge on these qualities in such a manner, as to seem to place a merit in things, which are totally independent of our will, and of which therefore the commendation in another can be of no service to a hearer in the way of example; but may, on the contrary, very readily do hurt in teaching him to place an undue value on things not in his power, and about which, as a Christian, he ought not to have the least anxiety. Nothing, therefore, must appear to be the subject of panegyric to the preacher, but moral excellence. Nothing ought to be enlarged on as a topic of discourse, but what can properly be held up to the audience as a subject, which it is incumbent on them to imitate; in other words, as the object of a noble emulation. I acknowledge, that those other qualities, accidental in respect of us, as I may call them, which have no necessary connection with virtue or religion, and are only physically good, may find a place in a discourse of this kind, when they are introduced not for their own sakes, but, as it were, in passing, and in order to set off real virtues. Thus the high birth of the person you extol, may be mentioned in order to add the greater lustre to his humility; his riches may be taken notice of by the way, in order to shew how well he understood the proper use of wealth, and in order to set off to the greater advantage how moderate he was in regard to gratifications merely personal, and how liberal and charitable in supplying the wants and contributing to the accommodation and comfort of others. It will be easily understood, that in the same way, almost every such advantage of person or fortune may be introduced. This would not be to exhibit wealth or nobleness of birth, as an object calculated to excite the ambition of the hearers, a thing exceedingly absurd in any, but more especially in the preacher of the humble religion of Jesus; but it would be to give an instructive lesson to the rich and noble, in regard to the use they ought to make of these advantages. It must be owned, on the other hand, that qualities physically bad may be rendered instrumental for the same purpose of giving higher relief to the virtues of the character. Thus the poverty of the person may serve greatly to enhance and recommend his patience, his contentment, his resignation, his prudence, his economy, nay even his charity and beneficence. In like manner, low birth and want of

education may be made subservient to display to more advantage the industry and application of mind, which could surmount these signal disadvantages so perfectly, that the defect could never have been discovered from his behaviour and conversation. And of this kind, we should say, as of the former, it is not recommending poverty and inferiority in point of birth to our estimation, but it is exhibiting a pattern to the poor and ignoble, whereby they may be instructed, how to convert such apparent evils into real occasions of improving their virtues, and of rendering these more than a sufficient compensation for every want. The ancient rhetoricians, though not so delicate on this point as Christian teachers ought to be, were yet sensible, that this was the best use that could be made of fortuitous advantages or disadvantages. Thus Quintilian, "*Et corporis quidem, fortuitorumque, cum levior, tum non uno modo tractanda laus est. Interim confert admirationi multum etiam infirmitas, ut cum Homerus, Tydea parvum sed bellatorem dicit fuisse. Fortuna vero cum dignitatem affert (namque est hæc materia ostendendæ virtutis uberior) tum quo minores opes fuerunt, eo majorem benefactis gloriam parit.*"* The following sentiment is indeed excellent, and well deserves our attention. "*Sed omnia quæ extra nos bona sunt, quæque hominibus forte obtigerunt, non ideo laudantur, quod habuerit qui eas, sed quod his honeste sit usus. Nam divitiæ et potentia et gratia, cum plurimum verium dent in utramque partem, certissimum faciunt morum experimentum : aut enim n. eliores propter hæc, aut bejores sumus.*"†

In regard to this species of discourse, as the immediate object is to please by presenting to the imagination a beautiful and finished picture in suitable colouring, it admits, from the nature of it, more of ornament, than any other kind delivered from the pulpit. There are few of the tropes and figures of eloquence, that may not properly find admission here. This is a kind of moral painting : and

* Of the body also and of adventitious circumstances the commendation is both lighter, and is not to be treated in an uniform manner. Sometimes even the mention of an infirmity may add much to our admiration of the character ; as when Homer says of Tydeus, that he was small of stature, but of great bravery. Fortune too may confer dignity ; but the smaller a person's means are, the greater the praise for the benefits he bestows.

† For all those advantages which are external and which are fortuitous, a person is not praised because he possessed them, but because he rightly employed them. For riches, and power, and reputation, while they very much increase our ability either for good or for evil, prove a most certain trial of our moral qualities ; since by their means we either become better or worse.

greater allowance is made for introducing things which serve merely the purpose of decoration, when the immediate object is to delight. Here too there is generally more indulgence in point of style, that can be admitted in any other species of sermon. In respect of flowers and harmony, this kind borders even on the poetical. Yet still it must be remembered, that this indulgence hath its bound. Whatever soars above the reach of the congregation, whatever appears either unintelligible or affected, is still faulty and offensive. I observe further that in regard to the very ornaments, of which the different sorts of discourses are susceptible, such as metaphors, comparisons, examples, these in the thoughts, as well as in the language, should be different in the different kinds. In the explanatory, all the borrowed illustrations and similitudes ought to be from things familiar and simple, as well as exhibited in a distinct and easy manner. In the controversial kind the simplicity and perspicuity of the decorations, though still of consequence, are not so much regarded, as a certain forcible manner of impressing the imagination, so as to carry conviction along with them. The similes here ought to be all a kind of analogical argument. Again, in the commendatory discourses, whose end is neither to inform nor to convince, but to please, the principal quality in the fund of the imagery to be employed is its beauty. No metaphor, however like or apposite, ought ever to be admitted here, that is not taken from an agreeable object. Under the general term agreeable, I must be understood to comprehend, not only the beautiful, strictly so called, but also the grand, the sublime, the wonderful and the new, if with these qualities there be not connected any thing that is disagreeable, mean, ugly or deformed.

As to the manner of *concluding* discourses of this kind, any one, or two, or even all of the three following may be adopted, according as the preacher shall judge most suitable, to the time, the subject and the occasion. *First*, you may make out, from the actions and behaviour you have been delineating, a clear and distinct character of the person. Or, *Secondly*, you may introduce a contrast between the conduct of the person commended in some of the most memorable instances, and that which there is reason to believe would be followed, or which commonly is followed by the generality, even of professing Christians, in the like circumstances. Or, *thirdly*, you may conclude with a more direct application to the passions of the hearers, in order to excite in them a generous ardour to be themselves, what they cannot contemplate or behold

without admiring. The first of these methods is far the most difficult. To draw a character, which shall be at once both just and striking, which shall set the different features in the most conspicuous point of view, that shall mark not only the exact turn of each, but the manner wherein they limit and set off one another, requires indeed the delicate hand of a master in the rhetorical art. It is attempted by every dabbler in historiography ; but it is not one of a hundred that succeeds. Let it be observed, that a character thus introduced in the conclusion of a sermon of this kind, ought in every part of it to be manifestly supported by the particular actions, and conduct delineated in the discourse, and should serve to recal to the memory and impress on it more strongly those particulars. As to the manner, a good deal of care and attention is necessary. The prevailing taste at present seems to be, to give the whole in a string of antitheses, the great dexterity of which consists in this, to make the contrasted members come as near as possible contradicting one another, and yet escape being really contradictory. Very often they do not escape this. But though I do by no means blame the use of antithesis in drawing characters, a matter of particular nicety, in as much as in this way, when well executed, the precise boundaries of the different traits are more precisely ascertained, yet a continued train of this figure through successive sentences, however well it may pass in history, has by far too artificial and elaborate an appearance to suit the seriousness and the simplicity of the pulpit diction. As much conciseness, as can be rendered consistent with perspicuity, is very suitable here.

The second kind of conclusion mentioned, by a contrast between the conduct delineated and that of others, is often a very pertinent application of the subject, in as much as it makes the virtues of another serve as a mirror to the hearers wherein they may discover their own vices and defects. It deserves only to be observed further on this article, that it is not necessary, that this part should be confined to the conclusion. When any thing noble, generous, humane or pious is illustrated in the discourse, as displayed on any signal occasion, it may very properly be contrasted with the conduct, either of any real character on record, or of what we know from experience to be the conduct of the majority of Christians. And this may be done in any part of the discourse. It is only when the narrative is both very affecting, and excites such an anxiety in the hearer for obtaining the sequel of the story and knowing the issue, that it is better not to interrupt the thread of the narration, but to

reserve any intended contrast to the conclusion. When a contrast can be found in true history, it generally answers better, than when it is merely hypothetical, founded in common experience.

The third method of concluding, by an address to the passions of the hearers, is the most common. This may be either general and have a relation to the whole, or it may consist of two or more particular addressess, referring respectively to the different virtues celebrated, or to some of the most memorable actions related in the discourse. Thus much may be said in general of all these different kinds, that no observation made, or motive urged here can be called apposite, unless it have a manifest reference to, and be founded in the facts related and the virtues celebrated in some part or other of the body of the discourse.

I must further observe, that the pathetic is more easily attained, and that the transition to it appears more natural in the conclusion of a commendatory sermon, than in that, either of an explanatory discourse, or of a controversial. In these two kinds, during the whole tenour of the discourse, which is of a nature merely speculative, the understanding and memory only are exerted, as the whole consists either in explanations or in reasonings. This is rather unfavourable for emotion, and it requires a good deal of address to pass successfully from the one to the other. The mind cannot all at once from a state of perfect coolness, enter with warmth and keenness into the views of the speaker. It behoves him, therefore, in beginning such an address, to take up the point on the key, if I may so express myself, to which he knows their souls are at the time attuned, and gradually to work them up to that pitch to which he wants to bring them. If he act a contrary part, and break out all at once, with heat and violence, when they are perfectly cool, so far from operating on their affections, or influencing their will, he will appear to them like one distracted, who flies into rage for he knows not what. No axiom is more important for bringing us to succeed in the pathetic, than this, that in addressing the hearers, we must enter with them on the subject in the same tone to which their minds are predisposed at the time to take it up in, and then insensibly work them up to ours. A prudent speaker, who perceives a coldness or indifference in his audience, will judge it necessary to disguise his own warmth, and to appear willing to canvass the matter as coolly as they can desire. If he succeeds thus in entering on it, and has the address for a little while to manage them,

he may carry them at last, to what pitch he will. We have an excellent example of this kind of address, in the funeral panegyric, which Shakspeare puts into the mouth of Antony, on his friend Julius Cæsar, immediately after his murder in the senate house.

But to return, I repeat the sentiment, as an important one, that nothing tends more strongly to make us deaf to what another says, than if he appear to be in a passion, when we are quite tranquil. Now the panegyrical discourses much more easily pass into the pathetic, than either the explanatory or the controversial. There is a near affinity between the moral sentiments, with the emotions they occasion, and the passions and affections of the mind. The gradation is perfectly smooth and natural from approbation to admiration, from admiration to esteem and love, from esteem and love of the virtuous and praiseworthy, to detestation and abhorrence of the contrary dispositions, and from these to corresponding desires and aversions. The orator has only to take the advantage of this gradation, and that frame of spirit which the whole scope of the discourse was calculated to produce.

LECTURE XII.

Of Pathetic Discourses, or, those addressed to the Passions. Of Persuasive Discourses, or such as are intended to operate on the Will.

I HAVE now gone through the explanation of the principal parts of the three first kinds of pulpit discourses, the explanatory, the controversial, and the commendatory, and the rules to be severally observed in composing each. I come now to the fourth kind, the *pathetic*, or that which is addressed immediately to the passions, and which is specially intended to rouse the mind from a state of languor and indifference to the impressions of fervour and affection. The occasion of discourses for this kind with us, it must be owned, are not very frequent. For though in some of the other kinds, particularly in the persuasive, a great deal is addressed to the passions, yet these are, in that species of sermon, only employed as means to persuade to the particular practice or duty recommended. Whereas in the pathetic, properly so called, the rousing of suitable affections is apparently the ultimate end. I acknowledge, that the whole of preaching either directly or indirectly points to persuasion.

But I denominate that only, the end of any species of discourse, which is the declared and apparent end of the speaker. I have observed, that the occasions of discourses of this kind are few ; there are however some. None is more remarkable or occurs oftener, than those calculated for disposing a congregation to a suitable commemoration of the sufferings of our Lord, in the sacrament of the supper, or Eucharist, as it is commonly named in Ecclesiastical History. I do not say, however, that this is the only kind of discourse that is adapted to such occasions. By no means. If that were the case, as the subject of exciting the affections on such occasions is always the same, it would lay a minister in his own parish under the necessity of recurring so often to the same topics, as could not fail to prove tiresome to the majority of the hearers, and that though the things advanced by him were ever so good. An explanatory, a commendatory, or a persuasive discourse, may also at such times be very pertinent. A little of the grace of novelty in form and manner, is exceedingly necessary for commanding the attention of the greater part of audiences. The only kind that I think ought to be excluded entirely from occasions of this nature, is the controversial. When the pathetic at such a time is made choice of, the preacher's aim is not to persuade the people to communicate. He supposes, that they have come to church with that intention. It is not to persuade them to the performance of any preparatory duty ; all this he supposes to have been performed already. But it is to operate on all the grateful and devout affections of the heart, and to put his hearers, I may say, in a proper frame of spirit for discharging the duty for which they are assembled, in such a reverend and pious manner, as may produce the best effect upon their minds, and tend most to the edification and confirmation of themselves and others. The subject for this purpose may be more or less comprehensive, as the preacher shall judge convenient. Indeed, for the sake of giving a little variety to what does not, from its nature, admit a great deal, it may not be improper at different times to follow different methods ; at one time, for instance, the subject may be the love of Christ as manifested in the whole scheme of redemption ; at another, the same thing, as manifested in his sufferings and death. It is discourses of the last kind, which are commonly called passion-sermons.

In regard to the exordium or *introduction*, there will be less occasion for much art, when the solemnity of the time or the purpose of their meeting tends itself to rouse the attention of the hearer,

and to supersede the address of the speaker. The topics for introducing the subject may then very pertinently be raised either from the intention for which the day was set apart, or from the nature and importance of the matter to be treated in the sermon. There is nothing peculiar to be observed in regard to the explanation of the text and context. If the discourse is intended merely to display the sufferings of our Lord, from his being betrayed into the hands of his enemies, to his death, the cruelty which was exercised upon him, and the meekness, piety and patience with which he bore it, it does not appear to be necessary, formally to lay down a method. It is enough in your narrative to follow the order of the history. In the manner of the exhibition, there will not be here a very material difference between that of the commendatory or panegyric discourse and this of the pathetic. Only the latter admits less show and ornament, and requires that we dwell longer on the most affecting circumstances. When the preacher's subject is such as doth not confine him within so narrow a compass, but affords an opportunity of expatiating on topics in themselves very distinct, but as it were concentrating in the tendency they all have to kindle the same affection in the breast; this common tendency gives a sufficient unity in discourses of this kind. The reason is obvious.

It may be remarked, that in this sort of discourses, more of the common textuary method may sometimes be followed, than any other species of sermon will properly admit. Thus suppose the text to be 2 Cor. viii. 9. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." The whole intention of the discourse being to stir up grateful and devout affection, these topics may severally and very pertinently be touched as tending all to the same important point. First, the consideration of the person, whose grace the apostle here celebrated, the Lord Jesus Christ who was rich. Secondly, the consideration of the persons, on whom this grace was bestowed, *you* (it was for your sakes) the posterity of fallen Adam, poor and helpless. Thirdly, the evidence and effect of his grace, "he became poor." Fourthly, the happy fruits and purchase of his grace, "that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." It is manifest, that each of these considerations, as it were, assists the other, all conspiring to kindle the warmest return of gratitude and love. Thus all pointing to one end, a grateful commemoration, gives unity to the discourse. Another instance of a text, which on

such an occasion, and for such a purpose, may very properly be divided in a similar manner, is that in 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." This is all of the verse, that, in a consistency with the unity of scope and design, should be taken into the text. The subject in effect, perfectly coincides with the former; and the distribution may be in other words the same. First, Christ the just. Secondly, us the unjust. Thirdly, "he suffered for sins." Fourthly, "that he might bring us to God." Each consideration severally enhances the obligation, and consequently the gratitude. In the manner of treating the different topics, one ought carefully to avoid all dry, minute, abstract and metaphysical explanations, as well as every thing, that may savour too much of argumentation and dispute. We are to remember, that this kind of discourse is very different in its nature and complexion, both from the explanatory and from the controversial. These are intended only to enlighten, but the other to warm. The view of the speaker, in these several topics in a pathetic discourse, is not to inform the hearers of what they did not know before, it is not to convince them of what they did not believe before; but it is to bring to their remembrance, truths which, though both known and believed, require often to be depicted in the most striking colours, that they may produce their congenial effect on the susceptible heart of the Christian. It is manifest, therefore, that cold and formal explanations, critical discussions, and abstract ratiocinations are here carefully to be avoided. A few lively strictures on the several heads, exhibiting all the principal considerations in the most glowing colours, are the surest way of raising such images in the fancy, as not only will give a greater permanency to the perception of the truths themselves, but will make them more effectually operate on the passions. In discourses of this kind, there is less occasion also for a formal *peroration* or conclusion than in any other. The reason is, that whereas a certain application in the other kinds, of the points discussed in the body of the discourse, requires a particular address to the passions, there cannot be the same propriety of ending in this manner here, where the whole discourse is addressed to the passions. Something therefore, which in few words may serve to set the whole object full in view, to recal and infix the impressions already made, is all that is necessary in discourses of this nature.

I shall now, in the last place, consider the fifth species of discourse mentioned, that which was intended to operate upon the

will, and which was denominated *persuasive*. Under this I include not only those sermons, whose end is to persuade to good, but those also which are calculated to dissuade from evil; for the structure and the rules of composition in both kinds are much the same. Here the distinguishing excellence results from a proper mixture of the argumentative and the pathetic, as it were, incorporated together. Let it be observed, that I use the word pathetic, in the largest acceptance, for whatever is fitted for exciting passion, affection or desire. The argumentative is necessary, because the intention of the speaker compriseth in it to convince the judgment, that is, for example, to satisfy me, that the conduct which you recommend, is agreeable to my duty, that it serves to promote my true interest, or is conducive to my honour or my peace. The pathetic is also necessary, because the speaker's intention does not terminate in the conviction of the judgment; he intends also, and principally, by means of the judgment, to influence the will. To make me believe, it is enough to shew me that things are so; to make me act, it is necessary to shew that the action will answer some end. That can never be an end to me, which gratifies no passion or affection in my nature. In order to persuade, it is always necessary to move the passions. Passion is the mover to action, reason is the guide. Good is the object of the will, truth is the object of the understanding. It is only through the passions, affections and sentiments of the heart, that the will is to be reached. It is not less necessary, therefore, in the orator to awaken those affections in the hearers, which can be made most easily to co-operate with his view; than it is to satisfy their understandings that the conduct to which he would persuade them, tends to the gratification of the affections raised. But though both are really purposed by the speaker, it is the last only, that is formally presented to them, as entering into his plan. To express a formed purpose to work upon their passions, would be like giving them warning to be upon their guard, for that he has a design upon them. *Artis est celare artem*. (It is the business of art to conceal art.) Such a method, on the contrary, would be to lay the artifice quite naked, and thereby totally to defeat its end. The emotion with which they perceive him agitated, and the animation of his language, far from being the result of a deliberate settled purpose, ought to appear in him, the necessary, the unavoidable consequences of the sense that he has of the unspeakable importance of the truths he utters, joined with an ardent desire of promoting the eternal happiness of them who hear him,

It is not, therefore, here one part that is pathetic, and another argumentative ; but these two are interwoven. The most cogent arguments are earnestly urged and pathetically expressed.

With regard to the whole of the introductory part, and explanation in this sort of discourses, I have nothing peculiar to remark. I shall only observe, that as to the *text*, it suits this kind better than any other, that it be in the form of a precept. I do not say, however, that this form is absolutely necessary. The end of the speaker may be, either to persuade to a Christian life in general, or to the performance of any Christian duty in particular. On the other hand, it may be to dissuade from a vicious course in general, or from the practice of any sin in particular. Nay further, it may be a persuasive or a dissuasive general or particular, either from all the motives that the nature of the subject will afford, or from one class of motives only. There is such a richness and variety in the motives, that may be urged, where religion is in the question, that in order to avoid being superficial, it may be very proper for a pastor amongst his own flock, as he has frequent opportunities of addressing them, sometimes to enforce the same duty from one set of motives, and sometimes from another. If the speaker's design be to comprehend in the same discourse, all the arguments which the nature of the subject admits, his text should be either a simple precept, wherein the duty is enjoined, or the sin prohibited, but no motive urged ; or perhaps a simple proposition, wherein such a practice is barely pronounced right or wrong. If the intention is to persuade from one class of motives only, there should be something in the text, that points to these motives.

Thus in the first case, suppose the speaker's intention be to persuade to repentance from every motive which either reason or scripture affords, his text may be the simple command *Repent*, which occurs in several places of the gospel ; or if he does not like one so brief, he may take these words of the apostle Paul, Acts xvii. 30. "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." But if he would persuade to repentance from the single consideration of its connection with the remission of sins, these words of Peter (Acts iii. 19.) will do better, "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ;" for the words *be converted* are merely explanatory, and therefore do not render the sentiment complex, whatever may be said of the expression. Or, if the speaker's intention (which is near of kin to the former) be to persuade to repentance from this consideration, that future misery is

the inevitable consequence of final impenitence, he may take these words of our Lord (Luke xiii. 15.) "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." To a Christian life in general one may persuade from various motives. Suppose from the native excellence of genuine virtue or true righteousness, the text in that case may be Prov. xii. 26. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour;" or from the present felicity to be found in the ways of religion, these words, Ps. xix. 11. "In keeping of them there is great reward," may serve as a text. Let it be observed, that such a text as this requires some explanation of the context, without which the subject is not to be understood, the matter spoken of being expressed by a pronoun. When this is not the case, and when the passage adopted appears independent and perfectly intelligible by itself, it may stand for a general rule, that such explanations are better let alone, and deserve to be considered, but as a sort of digressions at the best. If the intention were to persuade to a good life from the consideration of the comfort it brings in trouble, and especially in the views of death, this passage might answer, Ps. xxxvii. 37. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Bourdaloue, a celebrated French preacher of the last century, persuades to the same thing from the consideration of the future happiness of the saints from these words of our Saviour, Luke vi. 23. "Behold your reward is great in heaven." It deserves to be remarked, that there is here not only a reference to the context for the character or conduct to which the reward is promised, but that when you recur to the preceding words, they seem rather to refer to this in particular, the suffering of persecution and reproach for righteousness' sake. Yet as this itself is one of the noblest fruits and surest evidences of real sanctity, the choice cannot justly be deemed an inexcusable liberty. The reward is very properly considered, as ultimately to be attributed to that principle, from which the conduct flows. In persuading to particular duties, or dissuading from particular vices or temptations to vice, when the speaker intends (as it is not indeed so common here to confine one's self to one class of motives) to employ every argument of weight, which the subject presents to him, a single precept, briefly and plainly expressed, seems the most convenient choice for a text. If the design is to persuade to the love of God, these words are proper, Matt. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." If to the love of men, verse 39. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These passages may, in like manner,

serve as foundations for discourses explanatory of these duties. And as was remarked on the controversial sermon, we may observe here, that the minister in his own parish may, if he thinks it necessary, begin with a discourse explaining the duty enjoined or the vice prohibited, (if the text contains a prohibition,) and in his next discourse from the same words make it his business to persuade them to the one, or dissuade them from the other. But in many cases it must be acknowledged, that such previous explanatory discourse is not necessary; the full import of the precept being perfectly level to every ordinary capacity. Thus if the subject were to dissuade from the vice of lying, a proper text would be these words of Paul, Col. iii. 9. "Lie not to one another." If against detraction, James iv. 11. "Speak not evil one of another." In such plain cases, it must be owned, there would be little occasion for many words, and much less for a separate discourse, in order to explain the import and extent of the prohibition.

In regard to the method, however different the matter be, as something of the argumentative form must be preserved, the rules laid down in the controversial discourse may be of some use. One may begin, with showing the weakness of those pleas or arguments by which the dissolute, the vicious or the profane commonly defend their own conduct, and seduce others into the same track; and then produce positive arguments or motives to influence his hearers to that conduct which he recommends. Or it may not be necessary, to make a separate article of the adversary's plea; a place, for whatever is requisite in this way, may be found by the preacher, as he proceeds in the support of his own cause. In this case the different topics of argument may constitute the heads of discourse. Bourdaloue, on the text above mentioned, proposed to persuade his hearers to a pious and virtuous life from the consideration of the recompense that awaits the just in the world to come. And from these three different qualities of that recompense, its certainty, its greatness, its eternity, finds topics of argument for influencing his hearers to a proper regard to it. And these three topics divide the discourse. In treating each, he contrasts that quality he is illustrating with something of an opposite nature ever to be found in the rewards or pleasures of sin, their precariousness in opposition to its certainty, their insignificance in opposition to its greatness, and their transitoriness in opposition to its eternity. As to the method, in which the different topics are to be arranged, the same observations will hold that were made on the controversial

discourse, and therefore shall not be repeated. The arrangement above mentioned seems to be the best in that particular subject, yet I could not say, it were absolutely necessary. You may begin perhaps with equal propriety with the greatness of the reward, as with its certainty; but in any case, it seems most fit, that you should conclude with the eternity. When the different motives are mentioned in the text, the preacher may very properly take notice of the different clauses, as the foundations of his different heads. But when they are not explicitly mentioned, it savours of conceit and puerility to make them out by straining the words. 'This is a fault, into which the last mentioned orator, misled by the taste of the age and nation, frequently falls. Of the three topics aforesaid, only one can properly be said to be expressed in the text, namely, the greatness: yet he finds something in the words to serve as separate foundations to the several heads. First, says he, I shall consider the certainty pointed out in the emphatic term with which the sentence is introduced, *Ecce*, behold. Secondly, the greatness, *merces vestra multa est*, your reward is great. Thirdly, the eternity, *in cælo*, in heaven. It may not be amiss to observe, that in making the transition from one topic or head of discourse to another, it will often prove very helpful to the memory, to point out in brief how much you have already evinced, and what you are in the next place proceeding to evince.

As to the *conclusion*, it is very proper, first, to give a sum of the argument, in order to infix the whole more effectually on the minds of the hearers, and then more warmly to address the passions. If the preceding part has been suitably conducted, the people will be prepared for entering into the subject, with all the warmth that the speaker can desire. The way of practical inferences or speculative corollaries is not well suited to this kind of discourse. With regard to the first, the whole tenour of the sermon is practical, and therefore needs not a formal application of this kind; besides, that to enforce any thing else, than what was the direct aim of the whole, is really diverting the hearers' attention, and in some degree undoing the effect of what was said. Still more unsuitable are inferences, relating merely to the truth or the falsehood of certain tenets. When the discourse is a persuasive to the Christian life in general, or to some necessary and important duty immediately connected with the whole, as to repentance; in the peroration, one may very pertinently urge some motives to induce the hearers to enter with-

out loss of time on doing that which they must be sensible, it is both their duty and their interest to do. This is no other than advancing the aim and effect of the whole. In this part, however, he ought carefully to avoid the formality of proposing and arranging his topics. For this would give the appearance of a new and a separate discourse, to what was intended only as corroborative of the discourse preceding.

DIALOGUES
CONCERNING
ELOQUENCE IN GENERAL;
AND
PARTICULARLY THAT KIND WHICH IS PROPER
FOR THE PULPIT.

BY M. DE FENELON,
ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH, AND ILLUSTRATED
WITH NOTES AND QUOTATIONS.

BY WILLIAM STEVENSON, M. A.
RECTOR OF MORNINGTHORP IN NORFOLK.



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PREFACE.

BY THE CHEVALIER RAMSAY.

BOTH the ancients and the moderns have treated of eloquence, with different views, and in different ways—as logicians, as grammarians, and as critics : but we still wanted an author who should handle this delicate subject as a philosopher, and a Christian : and this the late Archbishop of Cambray has done in the following Dialogues.

In the ancient writers we find many solid precepts of rhetoric, and very just rules laid down with great exactness : but they are oftentimes too numerous, too dry ; and, in fine, rather curious than useful. Our author reduces the essential rules of this wonderful art, to these three points ; proving, painting, and moving the passions.

To qualify his orator for proving, or establishing any truth, he would have him a philosopher ; who knows how to enlighten the understanding, while he moves the passions ; and to act at once upon all the powers of the mind ; not only by placing the truth in so clear a light as to gain attention and assent ; but likewise by moving all the secret springs of the soul, to make it love that truth it is convinced of. In one word, our author would have his orator's mind filled with bright, useful truths, and the most exalted views.

That he may be able to paint, or describe well, he should have a poetic kind of enthusiasm ; and know how to employ beautiful figures, lively images, and bold touches, when the subject requires them. But this art ought to be entirely concealed : or, if it must appear, it should seem to be a just copy of nature. Wherefore our

author rejects all such false ornaments as serve only to please the ear with harmonious sounds ; and the imagination, with ideas that are more gay and sparkling, than just and solid.

To move the passions he would have an orator set every truth in its proper place ; and so connect them that the first may make way for the second ; and the next support the former : so that the discourse shall gradually advance in strength and clearness, till the hearers perceive the whole weight and force of the truth. And then he ought to display it in the liveliest images ; and both in his words and gesture use all those affecting movements that are proper to express the passions he would excite.

It is by reading the ancients that we must form our taste, and learn the art of eloquence in all its extent. But seeing that some of the ancients themselves have their defects, we must read them with caution and judgment. Our learned author distinguishes the genuine beauties of the purest antiquity, from the false ornaments used in after ages ; he points out what is excellent, and what is faulty, both in sacred and profane authors ; and shows us that the eloquence of the Holy Scripture, in many places, surpasses that of the Greeks and Romans, in native simplicity, liveliness, grandeur, and in every thing that can recommend truth to our assent and admiration.



DIALOGUES

CONCERNING ELOQUENCE.

THE FIRST DIALOGUE, BETWEEN *A.* AND *B.* AND *C.*

A. WELL, Sir, I suppose you have been hearing the sermon to which you would have carried me. I have but very little curiosity that way, and am content with our parish minister.

B. I was charmed with my preacher. You had a great loss, Sir, in not hearing him. I have hired a pew, that I may not miss one of his Lent sermons. O! he is a wonderful man. If you did but once hear him, you could never bear any other.

A. If it be so, I am resolved never to hear him. I would not have any one preacher give me a distaste of all others; on the contrary, I should choose one that will give me a relish and respect for the word of God, as may dispose me the more to hear it preached every where. But since I have lost so much by not hearing this fine discourse you are so pleased with, you may make up part of that loss, if you will be so kind as to communicate to us what you remember of it.

B. I should only mangle the sermon, by endeavouring to repeat any part of it. There were an hundred beauties in it that one cannot recollect, and which none but the preacher himself could display.

A. Well; but let us at least know something of his design, his proofs, his doctrine, and the chief truths he enlarged on. Do you remember nothing? Was you unattentive?

B. Far from it: I never listened with more attention and pleasure.

C. What is the matter then, do you want to be entreated?

FENELON'S DIALOGUES

B. No: but the preacher's thoughts were so refined, and depended so much on the turn and delicacy of his expressions, that though they charmed me while I heard them, they cannot be easily recollected; and though one could remember them, if they be expressed in other words, they would not seem to be the same thoughts; but lose all their grace and force.

A. Surely, Sir, these beauties must be very fading, if they vanish thus upon the touch, and will not bear a review. I should be much better pleased with a discourse which has more body in it, and less spirit; that things might make a deeper impression on the mind, and be more easily remembered. What is the end of speaking but to persuade people, and to instruct them in such truths as they can retain?

C. Now you have begun, Sir, I hope you will go on with this useful subject.

A. I wish I could prevail with you, Sir, to give us some general notion of the elegant harangue you heard.

B. Since you are so very urgent, I will tell you what I can recollect of it. The text was this,* 'I have eaten ashes like bread.' Now could any one make a happier choice of a text for Ash-wednesday? He shewed us that, according to this passage, ashes ought this day to be the food of our souls; then in his preamble he ingeniously interwove the story of Artemesia, with regard to her husband's ashes. His† transition to his Ave Maria was very artful; and his division was extremely ingenious: you shall judge of it. 1. 'Though this dust, said hé, be a sign of repentance, it is a principle of felicity: 2. Though it seems to humble us, it is really a source of glory: 3. And though it represents death, it is a remedy that gives immortal life.' He turned this division vari-

* Psalm cii. 9.

† The Romish preachers, in the preamble of their sermons, address themselves to the Virgin Mary; and are oftentimes very artful in their transition to it, as our author observes. We have a remarkable example of this in one of the greatest French orators, M. L' Esprit Flechier, bishop of Nismes, who seems to be oftener than once alluded to in these dialogues. In his panegyric on S. Joseph he introduces his Ave Maria thus,—Every thing seems to concur to the glory of my subject; the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and Mary, are concerned in it; why may I not hope for the assistance of one of them, the grace of the other, and the intercessions of the Virgin? To whom we will address ourselves in those words that the angel said to her, and which S. Joseph no doubt often repeated; Hail! Mary, &c. *Panegyriques*, vol. i. p. 71.

ous ways, and every time he gave it a new lustre by his antitheses. The rest of his discourse was not less bright and elegant ; the language was polite ; the thoughts new ; the periods were harmonious ; and each of them concluded with some surprising turn. He gave such just characters of common life, that his hearers found their various pictures faithfully drawn : and his exact anatomy of all the passions equalled the maxims of the great ROCHEFOUCAULT ; in short, I think it was a master-piece. But, Sir, I shall be glad to know your opinion of it.

A. I am unwilling to tell you my thoughts, or to lessen your esteem, of it. We ought to reverence the word of God ; to improve ourselves by all the truths that a preacher explains ; and avoid a critical humour, lest we should lessen the authority of the sacred function.

B. You have nothing to fear, Sir, at present. It is not out of curiosity that I ask your opinion ; but because I would have clear notions of it ; and such solid instructions as may not only satisfy myself, but be of use to others ; for you know my profession obliges me to preach. Give us your thoughts, therefore, without any reserve ; and do not be afraid either of contradicting or offending me.

A. Since you will have it so, I must obey your commands. To be free then ; I conclude, from your own account of this sermon, that it was a very sorry one.

B. Why so ?

A. Why ; can a sermon in which the scripture is falsely applied ; a scrap of profane history is told after a dry, childish manner ; and vain affectation of wit runs throughout the whole ; can such a sermon be good ?

B. By no means : but I do not think that the sermon I heard is of that sort.

A. Have patience, and I doubt not but you and I shall agree. When the preacher chose these words for his text, ' I have eaten ashes like bread,' ought he to have amused his audience with observing some kind of relation between the mere sound of his text, and the ceremony of the day ? Should he not first have explained the true sense of the words, before he applied them to the present occasion ?

B. It had been better.

A. Ought he not therefore to have traced the subject a little higher, by entering into the true occasion and design of the Psalm; and explaining the context? Was it not proper for him to inquire whether the interpretation he gave of the words was agreeable to the true meaning of them, before he delivered his own sense to the people, as if it were the word of God?

B. He ought to have done so: but what fault was there in his interpretation?

A. Why, I will tell you. David (who was the author of the cii. Psalm, speaks of his own misfortunes: he tells us, that his enemies insulted him cruelly, when they saw him in the dust, humbled at their feet, and reduced (as he poetically expresses it) to 'eat ashes like bread,' and 'to mingle his drink with weeping.' Now what relation is there between the complaints of David, driven from his throne, and persecuted by his son Absalom; and the humiliation of a Christian, who puts ashes on his forehead to remind him of his mortality, and disengage him from sinful pleasures? Could the preacher find no other text in scripture? Did Christ and his apostles, or the prophets, never speak of death, and the dust of the grave, to which all our pride and vanity must be reduced? Does not the scripture contain many affecting images of this important truth? Might he not have been content with the words of Genesis,* which are so natural and proper for this ceremony, and chosen by the church itself? Should a vain delicacy make him afraid of too often repeating a text that the Holy Spirit has dictated, and which the church appoints to be used every year? Why should he neglect such a pertinent passage, and many other places of scripture, to pitch on one that is not proper? This must flow from a depraved taste, and a fond inclination to say something that is new.

B. You grow too warm, Sir: supposing the literal sense of the text not to be the true meaning of it, the preacher's remarks might however be very fine and solid.

C. As for my part, I do not care whether a preacher's thoughts be fine or not, till I am first satisfied of their being true. But, Sir, what say you to the rest of the sermon?

A. It was exactly of a piece with the text. How could the preacher give such misplaced ornaments to a subject in itself so terrifying; and amuse his hearers with an idle story of Artemesia's sorrow; when he ought to have alarmed them, and given them the most terrible images of death?

* Gen. iii. 19.

B. I perceive then you do not love turns of wit, on such occasions. But what would become of eloquence if it were stript of such ornaments? Would you confine every body to the plainness of country preachers? Such men are useful among the common people; but persons of distinction have more delicate ears; and we must adapt our discourses to their polite taste.

A. You are now leading me off from the point. I was endeavouring to convince you, that the plan of the sermon was ill laid; and I was just going to touch upon the division of it; but I suppose you already perceive the reason why I dislike it: for, the preacher lays down three quaint conceits for the subject of his whole discourse. When one chooses to divide a sermon, he should do it plainly, and give such a division as naturally arises from the subject itself, and gives a light and just order to the several parts; such a division as may be easily remembered, and at the same time help to connect and retain the whole; in fine, a division that shows at once the extent of the subject and of all its parts. But, on the contrary, here is a man who endeavours to dazzle his hearers, and puts them off with three points of wit, or puzzling riddles, which he turns and plies so dexterously, that they must fancy they saw some tricks of legerdemain. Did this preacher use such a serious, grave manner of address as might make you hope for something useful and important from him? But, to return to the point you proposed: Did you not ask me whether I meant to banish eloquence from the pulpit?

B. Yes. I fancy that is your drift.

A. Think you so? pray what do you mean by eloquence?

B. It is the art of speaking well.

A. Has this art no other end, besides that of speaking well? Have not men some design in speaking? Or do they only talk for the sake of talking?

B. They speak to please, and to persuade others.

A. Pray let us carefully distinguish these two things. Men talk in order to persuade; that is certain; and too often they speak likewise to please others. But while one endeavours to please, he has another view; which, though more distant, ought to be his chief aim. A man of probity has no other design in pleasing others, than that he may the more effectually inspire them with the love of justice, and other virtues, by representing them as most amiable. He who seeks to advance his own interest, his reputation, or his fortune, strives to please, only that he may gain the affection and

esteem of such as can gratify his ambition, or his avarice ; so that this very design of pleasing is still but a different manner of persuasion that the orator aims at ; for he pleases others to inveigle their affection, that he may thereby persuade them to what advances his interest.

B. You cannot but own, then, that men often speak to please. The most ancient orators had this view. Cicero's orations plainly show that he laboured hard for reputation—and who will not believe the same of Isocrates, and Demosthenes too ? All the panegyrists were more solicitous for their own honour, than for the fame of their heroes ; and they extolled a prince's glory to the skies, chiefly because they hoped to be admired for their ingenious manner of praising him. This ambition seems to have been always reckoned commendable, both among the Greeks and the Romans ; and such emulation brought eloquence to its perfection ; it inspired men with noble thoughts and generous sentiments, by which the ancient republics were made to flourish. The advantageous light in which eloquence appeared in great assemblies, and the ascendant it gave the orator over the people, made it to be admired, and helped to spread polite learning. I cannot see indeed why such an emulation should be blamed even among Christian orators ; provided they did not show an indecent affectation in their discourses, nor in the least enervate the precepts of the gospel. We ought not to censure what animates young people, and forms our greatest preachers.

A. You have here put several things together, which, if you please, Sir, we will consider separately ; and observe some method in inquiring what we ought to conclude from them. But let us above all things avoid a wrangling humour ; and examine the subject with calmness and temper, like persons who are afraid of nothing so much as of error ; and let us place the true point of honour in a candid acknowledgment of our mistakes, whenever we perceive them.

B. That is the exact state of my mind, or at least I judge it to be so ; and I entreat you to tell me when you find me transgressing this equitable rule.

A. We will not as yet talk of what relates to preachers ; for that point may be more seasonably considered afterwards. Let us begin with those orators whose examples you vouched. By mentioning Demosthenes and Isocrates together, you disparage the former ; for the latter was a lifeless declaimer, that busied himself

in polishing his thoughts, and giving an harmonious cadence to his periods. He had a very* low and vulgar notion of eloquence ; and placed almost the whole of it in a nice disposal of his words. A man who employed ten or (as others say) fifteen years, in smoothing the periods of a panegyric, which was a discourse concerning the necessities of Greece, could give but a very small and slow relief to the republic, against the enterprises of the Persian king. Demosthenes spoke against Philip in a quite different manner. You may read the comparison that Dionysius Halicarnassius has made of these two orators, and see there the chief faults he observed in Isocrates, whose discourses are vainly gay and florid, and his periods adjusted with incredible pains, merely to please the ear ; while on the contrary,† Demosthenes moves, warms, and captivates the heart. He was too sensibly touched with the interest of his country, to mind the little glittering fancies that amused Isocrates. Every oration of Demosthenes is a close chain of reasoning, that represents the generous notions of a soul who disdains any thought that is not great. His discourses gradually increase in force by greater light and new reasons ; which are always illustrated by bold figures and lively images. One cannot but see that he has the good of the republic entirely at heart ; and that nature itself speaks in all his transports ; for his artful address is so masterly, that it never appears. Nothing ever equalled the force and vehemence of his discourses. Have you never read the remarks that Longinus made on them, in his treatise of the Sublime ?

B. No : is not that the treatise that Mr. Boileau translated ? Do you think it fine ?

A. I am not afraid to tell you that I think it surpasses Aristotle's

* In the introduction of this very panegyric, that our author mentions, Isocrates says, Such is the nature of eloquence, that it makes great things appear little, and small things to seem great : it can represent old things as new, and new things as if they were old ; and that therefore he would not decline a subject that others had handled before him, but would endeavour to declaim better than they. Upon which Longinus (§ 38.) makes this judicious remark, That by giving such a character of eloquence, in the beginning of his panegyric, the orator in effect cautioned his hearers not to believe his discourse.

† In oratoribus vero, Græcis quidem, admirabile est quantum inter omnes unus excellat. Attamen cum esset Demosthenes, multi oratores magni, et clari fuerunt, et antea, fuerant, nec postea defecerunt. *Cic. Orat.* § 2.

Quid denique Demosthenes ? non cunctos illos tenues et circumspectos [oratores] vi, sublimitate, impetu, cultu, compositione superavit ? non insurgit locis ? non figuris gaudet ? non translationibus nitet ? non oratione ficta dat carentibus vocem ?

Quintil. lib. xii. cap. 10.

Rhetoric ; which, though it be a very solid tract, is yet clogged with many dry precepts that are rather curious than fit for practice ; so that it is more proper to point out the rules of art to such as are already eloquent, than to give us a just taste of rhetoric, and to form true orators. But Longinus, in his discourse of the Sublime, intersperses among his precepts many fine examples from the greatest authors, to illustrate them. He* treats of the Sublime in a lofty manner, as his translator has judiciously observed. He warms our fancy, and exalts our mind ; he forms our taste ; and teaches us to distinguish what is either fine or faulty, in the most famous ancient writers.

B. Is Longinus such a wonderful author ? Did he not live in the days of Zenobia, and the emperor Aurelian ?

A. Yes ; you cannot but know their history.

B. Did not those days fall vastly short of the politeness of former ages ? and can you imagine that an author who flourished in the declension of learning and eloquence had a better taste than Isocrates ? I cannot believe it.

A. I was surprised myself, to find it so ; but you need only read him, to be convinced of it. Though he lived in a very corrupted age, he formed his judgment upon the ancient models ; and has avoided almost all the reigning faults of his own time ; I say almost all, for I must own, he studied rather what is admirable, than what is useful ; and did not consider eloquence as subservient to morality, nor apply it to direct the conduct of life. And in this he does not seem to have had such solid views as the ancient Greeks, and especially some of their philosophers. But we ought to forgive him a failing, for which Isocrates was far more remarkable, though he lived in a more refined age. And this defect ought the rather to be overlooked in a particular discourse, where Longinus does not treat of what is proper to instruct men, but of what is apt to move and seize their passions. I choose to recommend this author, Sir, because he will help to explain my meaning to you. You will see what a glorious character he gives of Demosthenes,

* Thee, bold LONGINUS ! all the nine inspire,
And bless their critic with a poet's fire :
An ardent judge, who, zealous in his trust,
With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just ;
Whose own example strengthens all his laws,
And is himself that great Sublime he draws.

Mr. Pope's Essay on Criticism, p. 45.

from whom he quotes several passages that are most sublime ; he will likewise show you those faults of Isocrates that I mentioned. If you be unwilling to take the trouble of becoming acquainted with these authors, by reading their works, you may get a very just notion of them by consulting Longinus. Let us now leave Isocrates, and talk of Demosthenes and Cicero.

B. You are for leaving Isocrates, because he is not for your purpose.

A. Let us go on then with Isocrates, since you are not yet convinced ; and let us judge of his rhetoric by the rules of eloquence itself ; and by the sentiments of Plato, the most* eloquent writer among the ancients. Will you be determined by him ?

B. I will be determined by him, if he be in the right : but I never resign my judgment implicitly to any author.

A. Remember this rule ; it is all that I ask of you. And if you do not let some fashionable prejudices bias your judgment, reason will soon convince you of the truth. I would therefore have you believe neither Isocrates nor Plato ; but judge of them both by clear principles. Now I suppose you will grant that the chief end of eloquence is to persuade men to embrace truth and virtue.

B. I am not of your mind ; this is what I have already denied.

A. I will endeavour to prove it then. Eloquence, if I mistake not, may be considered in three respects ; as the art of enforcing truth on people's minds, and of making them better ; as an art indifferent in itself, which wicked men may use as well as good, and which may be applied to recommend injustice and error as well as probity and truth ; and, as an art which selfish men may use to ingratiate themselves with others, to raise their reputation, and make their fortune. Which of these ends do you admit of ?

B. I allow of them all. What do you infer from this concession ?

A. The inference will afterwards appear. Have patience a

* Sed ego neque illis assentiebar, neque harum disputationum inventori, et principi longe omnium in dicendo gravissimo, et *Eloquentissimo Platoni*, cujus tum Athenis cum Carneade diligentius legi Georgium quo in libro, hoc maxime admirabar Platonem, quod mihi in oratoribus irridendis, ipse esse *Orator Summus* videbatur.

Cic. de Orat. lib. 1. § 2.

Quid denique Demosthenes ?—non illud jusjurandum per cæsos in Marathone ac Salamine propugnatores reipublicæ, satis manifesto docet præceptorem ejus Platonem fuisse ? quem ipsum num Asianum appellabimus plerumque instinctis divino spiritu vatibus comparandum ?

Quint. lib. xii. cap. 10. See Longinus, § xiii.

little ; and be satisfied, if I say nothing but what is evidently true, till by gradual advances I lead you to the right conclusion. Of the three ends of eloquence, I now mentioned, you will undoubtedly prefer the first.

B. Yes : it is the best.

A. What think you of the second ?

B. I see what you aim at ; you are going into a fallacy. The second sort is faulty, because of the ill use the orator makes of his eloquence, to enforce error and vice. But still the rhetoric of a wicked man may be good in itself, though the use he makes of it be pernicious. Now we are talking of the nature and rules of eloquence ; not of the uses it should be applied to. Let us keep to the true state of the question.

A. If you will do me the favour to hear me a little, you will find that I have the point in dispute always in view. You seem then to condemn the second sort of eloquence : or, to speak without ambiguity, you condemn the* abuse of rhetoric.

B. Right. You now speak correctly, so far then we are agreed.

A. What say you of the third end of eloquence ; I mean the orator's endeavouring to please others by talking ; that he may raise his reputation or his fortune.

B. You know my opinion already. I reckon such an use of eloquence very fair and allowable ; seeing it excites a laudable emulation and helps to improve men's talents.

A. What kind of talents would you have chiefly improved ? Suppose you had some new state, or commonwealth, to model, in what kinds of knowledge would you have the subjects trained up and instructed ?

B. In every kind that could make them better. I would endeavour to make them good subjects, peaceable, obedient, and zealous for the public welfare. I would have them fit to defend

* When I consider the means of happy living (says an eloquent writer) and the causes of their corruption, I can hardly forbear recanting what I said before ; and concluding, that eloquence ought to be banished out of all civil societies as a thing fatal to peace and good manners. To this opinion I should wholly incline, if I did not find, that it is a weapon which may be as easily procured by bad men, as by good : and that if these only should cast it away, and those retain it ; the naked innocence of virtue would be upon all occasions exposed to the armed malice of the wicked.

Bishop Sprat's Hist. of the Royal Society, p. iii.

their country in case of war; and in peace to observe and support the laws, to govern their families, cultivate their lands, train up their children to the practice of virtue, and inspire them with a strong and just sense of religion. I would have them carry on such a trade as the state and necessities of the country might require, and apply themselves to such arts and sciences as are useful in common life. These I think ought to be the chief aims of a law-giver.

A. Your views are very just and solid. You would then have subjects averse to laziness; and employed about such useful things as should tend some way or other to advance the public good.

B. Certainly.

A. And would you exclude all useless professions?

B. Yes.

A. You would allow only of such bodily exercises as conducted to people's health and strength. I do not mention the beauty of the body, for that is a natural consequence of health and vigour, in bodies that are duly formed.

B. I would suffer no other exercises.

A. Would you not therefore banish all those that serve only to amuse people, and cannot render them fitter to bear either the constant labours and employments of peace, or the fatigues of war?

B. Yes; I should follow that rule.

A. I suppose you would do it for the same reason that you would likewise condemn (as you already granted,) all those exercises of the mind which do not conduce to render it more strong, sound, and beautiful; by making it more virtuous.

B. It is so. What do you infer from that? I do not yet see your drift: your windings are very long.

A. Why; I would argue from the plainest principles; and not advance the least step, without carrying light and certainty along with us. Answer me then, if you please.

B. Seeing we lay down the rule you last mentioned, for the management of the body, there is certainly greater reason to follow it in the conduct and improvement of the mind.

A. Would you permit such arts as are only subservient to pleasure, amusement, and vain curiosity; and have no relation either to the duties of domestic life, or the common offices of society?

B. I would banish all such from my commonwealth.



A. If you allowed of mathematicians, then, it would be for the sake of mechanics, navigation, surveying of land, the fortification of places, and such calculations as are useful in practice, &c. So that it is the usefulness of the mathematics that would recommend them to your patronage. And if you tolerated physicians and lawyers, it would be for the preservation of health, and the support of justice.

B. Right.

A. And with the same view of usefulness you would admit of all other serviceable professions.

B. Certainly.

A. But how would you treat the musicians ?

B. I would encourage them.

A. Would you not lay them under some proper restraint, according to the judgment and practice of the ancient Greeks, who always joined pleasure and usefulness together ?

B. Explain yourself a little.

A. Though they joined music and poetry together, and carried both these arts to the greatest perfection ; they applied them to inspire people's minds with fortitude, and noble thoughts. They used poetry and music to prepare them for battle, and carried musicians and their various instruments to war. Hence came drums and trumpets, which raised in them a spirit of enthusiasm, and a sort of fury that they call divine. It was by music, and the charms of verse, that they softened savage nations ; and by the same harmony, they sweetly instilled wisdom into their children. They made them sing Homer's verses to inspire their minds with the love of glory, liberty, and their native country ; and with a contempt of death, and riches, and effeminate pleasure. They gave their very dances a grave and serious turn ; for it is certain they danced not merely for the sake of pleasure. We see, by David's example,† that the eastern people reckoned dancing a serious kind of employment, like music, and poetry. The mysterious dances of the priests were adopted by the heathens among their ceremonies, on solemn festivals, in honour of their gods. There were a thousand instructions couched under their poems, and their fables ; nay, their most grave and austere philosophy always appeared with an air of gaiety and good humour. All those arts that consisted either in melodious sounds, regular motions of the body, or the use of words ; music, dancing, eloquence, and poetry, were

* 2 Sam. vi. 5, 14.

invented to express the passions ; and, by that means, to communicate these passions to others. Thus did they endeavour to convey noble sentiments to people's minds, and give them lively, affecting views of the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice. So that all these arts, under the show of pleasure, favoured the most serious designs of the ancients, and were used to promote morality and religion. Even the diversion of hunting was encouraged to train up the youth for war. Their strongest pleasures contained always some solid instruction : From which source flowed those many heroic virtues in Greece, which all ages have since admired. It is true, this first kind of instruction was afterwards changed, and of itself was accompanied with remarkable defects. The chief fault of it was its being founded on a false and pernicious scheme of religion, in which the Greeks, and all the ancient sages of the heathen world were strangely deceived, being plunged into gross idolatry. But notwithstanding this fundamental mistake, they chose a very proper way of inspiring men with religion and virtue ; their method was wise, agreeable, and apt to make a lively, lasting impression.

C. You said that this first institution was afterwards changed : pray, how did it happen ?

A. Though virtue gives men the true politeness ; if great care be not taken, politeness gradually degenerates into an unmanly softness. The Asiatic Greeks fell first into this corruption. The Ionians grew effeminate, and all that coast of Asia was a theatre of luxury. The Cretans too became corrupted, notwithstanding the wise laws of Minos. You know the* verse that St. Paul quotes from one of their own poets. Corinth was remarkable for its excessive riot and dissoluteness. The Romans, as yet unpolished, began to fall into such practices as quite relaxed their rustic virtue. Athens was not free from the general contagion, with which Greece was all over infected. Pleasure, which was used at first as the means to convey wisdom into people's minds, usurped the place of wisdom itself ; and in vain did the philosophers remonstrate against this disorder. Socrates arose, and showed his deluded fellow citizens that the pleasure, about which they were entirely employed, ought only to be used as the vehicle of wisdom,

* Κέρτες ἀεὶ ψεύσαι, κατὰ Θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί.

Tit. i. 12.

and an incentive to virtue. Plato, his disciple, (who was not ashamed to compose his dialogues on the plan and subject of his master's discourses,) banished from his republic all such musical notes, scenes of tragedy, and poetical compositions, (even such parts of Homer himself,) as did not incline people to love order and wise laws. This, Sir, was the judgment of Socrates and Plato concerning poets and musicians : do you approve of it ?

B. I am entirely of their mind ; and would allow of nothing that is useless. Since we may find pleasure enough in solid and valuable things, we ought not to seek for it elsewhere. In order to recommend virtue to men's esteem and practice, we must show them that it is consistent with pleasure ; and, on the contrary, if we separate pleasure from virtue, people will be strongly tempted to forsake a virtuous course. Besides, that which gives pleasure only, without instruction, can at best but amuse and soften the mind. Do not you see, Sir, how much a philosopher I am become by hearing you ? But let us go on to the end : for we are not yet perfectly agreed.

A. I hope we shall be very quickly. And since you have grown so much a philosopher, give me leave to ask you one question more. We have obliged musicians and poets to employ their art only for promoting virtue ; and the subjects of your new republic are debarred from all such spectacles as can only please and not instruct them. But what would you do with conjurers ?

B. They are impostors that ought to be banished from all societies.

A. They do no harm. You cannot think they are sorcerers ; so that you have no reason to be afraid of their practising any diabolical art.

B. No, I do not fear that ; nor should I give the least credit to any of their senseless stories. But they do harm enough by amusing the common people. I will not suffer such idle persons in my commonwealth, as divert others from their business, and have no other employment but to amuse people with foolish talk.

A. But, perhaps, they get a livelihood that way, and lay up wealth for themselves, and their families.

B. No matter ; they must find out some honest way of living. It is not enough that they seek a livelihood ; they must gain it by some employment that is useful to the public. I say the same of all those strolling vagabonds who amuse crowds with silly prattle and foolish songs. For though they should never lie, nor say any

thing that is immodest, their being useless to the public is guilt enough. So that they ought either to be excluded from society, or compelled to follow some useful occupation.

A. Would you not at least tolerate tragedians, provided they represent no scenes of immodesty or extravagant love? I do not ask you this question as a Christian; answer only as a lawgiver, and a philosopher.

B. If tragedies did not conduce to instruction as well as to pleasure, I should condemn them.

A. Right. In that you are exactly of Plato's opinion; for he would not allow of any poems or tragedies in his republic, that should not first be examined by the guardians of the laws; that so the people might neither hear nor see any thing but what should tend to strengthen the laws and promote virtue. In this you likewise fall in with the sentiments of other ancient authors, who judged that tragedy ought to turn chiefly upon two passions; either the terror that arises from a view of the fatal effects of vice, or that compassion which accompanies the representation of an oppressed and steady virtue. Sophocles and Euripides wrote with these views, and always endeavoured to excite either pity or terror.

B. I remember I have met with this last rule in Mr. Boileau's Art of Poetry.

A. You are right. He is a man that knows perfectly well not only the foundation of poetry, but likewise the solid aim to which philosophy—superior to all arts—ought to direct the poet.

B. But whither are you leading me all this while?

A. I lead you no farther; you guide yourself now, and are happily come to the conclusion I first proposed. Have you not said, that in your republic, you would not suffer idle people who amuse others, and have no other business but merely to talk? Is it not upon this principle that you would exclude all such tragedies as do not convey instruction as well as pleasure? Now, will you suffer that to be done in prose, that you will not tolerate in verse? After such a just rigour against useless poetry, how can you show any favour to those* declaimers who talk only to show their parts?

* Who can behold, without indignation, how many mists and uncertainties these specious tropes and figures have brought on our knowledge? how many rewards, that are due to more profitable and difficult arts, have been still snatched away by the easy vanity of fine speaking; for now I am warmed with this just anger, I cannot withhold myself from betraying the shallowness of all those seeming mysteries, upon which we writers and speakers

B. But these orators we were speaking of, have two designs that are commendable.

A. What are they ?

B. The first is to maintain themselves ; for, by their profession, they procure a subsistence. Their rhetoric gets them repute ; and this brings along with it that wealth they stand in need of.

A. You yourself have already answered this pretence ; for, did you not say that it is not enough that one gains a livelihood, unless he get it by some employment that is useful to the public ? He who should represent tragedies that give no instruction, might get his bread by them ; but this would not hinder you from driving him out of your commonwealth. You would say to him, ‘Go choose some regular, useful employment ; and do not divert your neighbours from their business. If you would have a lawful gain from them, apply yourself to do them some real service, or to make them more wise and virtuous.’ Now why should you not say the same to the rhetoricians ?

B. But I have a second reason to offer for tolerating them.

A. Pray, let us hear it.

B. Why, the orator serves the public.

A. In what ?

B. He improves people’s minds, and teaches them eloquence.

A. Suppose I should invent some fantastic art, or imaginary language, that could not be of any use ; could I serve the public by teaching such a senseless language, or silly art ?

B. No ; because one cannot serve others as a master, unless he could teach them something that is useful.

A. You cannot prove then that an orator serves the public, by his teaching eloquence, unless you could first show that it is an useful art. Of what use are a man’s fine thoughts if they do not advance the public good ? I am very sensible that they are advantageous to himself, for they dazzle his hearers, who have so bad a taste that they will applaud his skill, and even reward him for his useless talk. But ought you to suffer such a mercenary, fruitless

look so big. And in few words, I dare say, that of all the studies of men, nothing may be sooner obtained, than this vicious abundance of phrase, this trick of metaphors, this volubility of tongue, which makes so great noise in the world. But I spend words in vain ; for the evil is now so inveterate, that it is hard to know whom to blame, or where to begin to reform. We all value one another so much upon this beautiful deceit, and labour so long after it, in the years of our education, that we cannot but ever think kinder of it than it deserves. *Bishop Sprat’s Hist. of the Royal Society, p. 112.*

eloquence in the government you have to model? A shoemaker is serviceable in his way, and maintains his family with what he gains by supplying other people's necessities. So that you see the most ordinary employments tend to some useful purpose; and there is no other art but the rhetorician's that serves only to amuse people with talking. In fine, such eloquence can only, on the one hand, satisfy the vain curiosity of the hearers, and encourage their idleness; and, on the other, gratify the declaimer's pride and ambition. But, for the honour of your republic, Sir, do not tolerate such an abuse.

B. I must grant that an orator's aim should be to make people more wise and virtuous.

A. Do not forget this; you shall see the consequences of it by and by.

B. Notwithstanding this concession, he who is employed in instructing others, may at the same time endeavour to acquire reputation and wealth for himself.

A. I told you before, that we are not now handling the point as Christians; I need only use philosophy against you. Let me put you in mind that you grant an orator is obliged to instruct others with a design to improve them in virtue. Thus we get rid of all useless declaimers. We ought not even to suffer panegyrists any farther than they render true wisdom and probity more amiable by their praises; and propose models of virtue* and valour that are worthy of imitation.

B. What, then, is a panegyric good for nothing, unless it be full of morality?

A. Have you not granted this already? Instruction is the proper end of speech; and the only good reason for praising any hero, is, that we may represent his worth to others, in order to excite their emulation, and to show them that virtue and true glory are inseparable. Therefore a panegyric should be kept free from all general, excessive, flattering praises; and such barren thoughts as do not afford the least instruction. Every thing should tend to make the hearers in love with what is truly great and good. But we find

* *Perspicuum est igitur alia esse in homine optanda, alia laudanda. Genus, forma, vires, opes, divitiæ, ceteraque quæ fortuna det, aut extrinsecus, aut corpori, non habent in se veram laudem, quæ deberi Virtuti uni putatur. Virtus autem quæ est per se ipsa laudabilis, et sine qua nihil laudari potest, tamen habet plures partes, quarum alia est ad laudationem aptior.*

that most panegyrists seem to magnify particular virtues, only that they may the more effectually praise those that practised them, and set off their heroes to greater advantage. When they have any one to praise, they exalt his peculiar virtues far above all others. But every thing has its turn; and, on another occasion, those very qualities, which they preferred before, must now give place to some other virtues, that come in course to be extolled to the highest pitch. In this respect, I think Pliny is to be blamed. If he had praised Trajan as a fit model for other heroes to copy after, this would have been a design worthy of an orator. But the praise of that prince (however deserving he was) ought not to have been Pliny's chief aim. Trajan should only have been proposed to mankind as an imitable example, to allure them to virtue. When a panegyrist has such a mean view, as to praise the person, rather than the virtues that render him conspicuous, this is only flattery addressed to pride.

B. What think you then of those poems that were made in praise of ancient heroes? Homer has his Achilles, and Virgil his Æneas. Will you condemn these two poets?

A. By no means, Sir; do but examine the design of their works. In the *Iliad*, Achilles is the chief hero; but his praise is not the main end of the poem. His character is faithfully drawn with all its defects; nay, these very defects are a part of that instruction which the poet designed to convey to posterity. The great design of this work was to inspire the Greeks with the love of warlike glory; and a dread of discord, as the greatest obstacle to success. This moral instruction is plainly interwoven throughout the poem. The *Odyssey* indeed represents, in Ulysses, a hero more regular and more accomplished; but this is still natural. For, of course, a man, like Ulysses, whose chief character is wisdom, must be more wary, and uniform in his conduct, than such a rough, warm, forward youth as Achilles. So that in drawing both these heroes, Homer seems only to have copied nature. In fine, throughout the *Odyssey* we find innumerable instructions for the whole conduct of life; and one cannot but observe that the poet's design, in describing a prudent man, whose wisdom makes him always successful, was to show posterity what good effects might be expected from prudent piety, and a regular life. Virgil, in his *Æneid*, has imitated the *Odyssey* in his hero's character; and has drawn him brave, moderate, pious, and steady. But it is evident that the praise of Æneas was not the poet's principal aim. That hero

was designed to represent the Roman people, who descended from him; and Virgil meant to show them that their extraction was divine; that the gods had destined them to govern the world; and by this he animated them to the practice of such heroic virtues as might support the glory designed for them. Now a heathen could not possibly devise a nobler moral than this. The only fault of which Virgil can be suspected, is his having had his private interest too much in view; and his turning his excellent poem to the praise of Augustus, and his family, with too great an air of flattery. But we ought not to criticise any author too severely.

B. But will you not allow a poet, or an orator, to seek his fortune in an honourable way?

A. After this useful digression concerning panegyrics, we now return to the difficulty you proposed. The question is, whether an orator ought to be entirely disinterested?

B. I do not think that he ought: for this would overturn the most common maxims.

A. In your republic, would you not have orators obliged to the strictest rules of truth? Do you not own that they ought never to speak in public, but in order to instruct people, to reform their conduct, and strengthen the laws?

B. Yes.

A. An orator then should have nothing either to hope or fear from his hearers, with regard to his own interest. If you allowed of ambitious* mercenary declaimers, do you think they would oppose all the foolish, unruly passions of men? If they themselves be subject to avarice, ambition, luxury, and such shameful disorders, will they be able to cure others? If they seek after wealth, can they be fit to disengage others from that mean pursuit? I grant, that a virtuous and disinterested orator ought always to be supplied with the conveniences of life, nor can he ever want them, if he be a true philosopher; I mean, such a wise and worthy person as is fit to reform the manners of men; for then he will live after a plain, modest, frugal, laborious manner: he will have occasion but for

* Jam hoc quis non videt, maximam partem orationis in tractatu æqui bonique consistere? dicetne de his secundum dicitam rerum dignitatem malus atque iniquus? denique—demonstrat id quod nullo modo fieri potest, idem ingenii, studii, doctrinæ, pessimo, atque optimo viro, uter melior dicetur orator? nimirum qui homo quoque melior. Non igitur unquam malus idem homo, et perfectus orator. Quint. lib. xiii. c. 1.

little, and that little he will never want ; though, he should earn it with his own hands. Now, what is superfluous ought not to be offered him, as the recompense of his public services, and indeed it is not worthy of his acceptance. He may have honour and authority conferred on him ; but if he be master of his passions, as we suppose, and above selfish views, he will use this authority only for the public good ; and be ready to resign it, when he can no longer enjoy it without flattery or dissimulation. In short, an orator cannot be fit to persuade people, unless he be inflexibly upright ; for, without this steady virtue, his talents and address would, like a mortal poison, infect and destroy the body politic. For this reason, Cicero* thought that virtue is the chief and most essential quality of an orator, and that he should be a person of such unspotted probity as to be a pattern to his fellow-citizens ; without which he cannot even seem to be convinced himself of what he says ; and consequently, he cannot persuade others.

B. I am sensible there is a great deal of weight in what you say ; but after all, may not a man fairly employ his talents to raise himself in the world ?

A. Let us look back always to the principles we laid down. We have agreed that eloquence, and the profession of an orator, should be devoted to the instruction of the people, and the reformation of their practice. Now, to do this with freedom and success, a man must be disinterested, and must teach others to condemn death, and riches, and unmanly pleasure. He must infuse into their minds the love of moderation, frugality, a generous concern for the public good, and an inviolable regard to the laws and constitution : and the orator's zeal for all these must appear in his conduct, as well as in his discourses. But will he who strives to please others, that he may make his fortune, and who therefore

* Est enim eloquentia una quædam de summis virtutibus—quæ quo major est vis, hoc est magis probitate jungenda, summaque prudentia ; quarum virtutum expertibus si dicendi copiam tradiderimus, non eos quidem oratores effecerimus ; sed furentibus quædam arma dederimus. *De Orat.* 1. iii. § 14.

Set ergo nobis orator quem instituimus is, qui a M. Cicerone finitur, vir bonus dicendi peritus—Adde quod ne studio quidem operis pulcherrimi vacare mens, nisi omnibus vitiis libera, potest—Quid putamus facturas cupiditatem, avaritiam, invidiam ? quarum impotentissimæ cogitationes, somnos etiam ipsos, et illa per quietem visa, perturbent. Nihil est enim tam occupatum, tam multiforme, tot ac tam variis affectibus concisum atque laceratum, quam mala mens.

Quint. lib. xii. cap. 1.

avoids disobliging, any body ; I say, will such an artful, selfish person, inculcate unacceptable truths with boldness and authority ? Or, if he should, will any one believe a man who does not seem to believe himself ?

B. But supposing him to be in narrow circumstances, he does no harm, I hope, by endeavouring to improve them.

A. If he be pinched, let him try to mend his condition some other way. There are other professions that will easily set him above want. But if he be in such extreme distress as to depend on relief from the public, he is not yet fit to be an orator. Would you choose men that are indigent, and almost starving, to be judges in your commonwealth ? Would you not be afraid that their wants might expose them to corruption, or betray them into some dishonourable compliance ? Would you not rather choose persons of note and distinction, who are above necessity, and out of the reach of its temptations ?

B. I believe I should.

A. For the same reason, if you wanted orators, that is, public masters to instruct, reclaim, and form the minds and manners of the people, would you not choose such men as wanted nothing, and are far above little selfish aims ? And if there were others who had proper talents for this superior office, but were clogged with their personal concerns, and narrow views of private interests ; would you not excuse them from showing their eloquence till they were more easy and disengaged in their circumstances ; and could speak in public without being suspected of any mean design ?

B. It would be better. But does not the experience of our own age plainly show, that an orator may make his fortune by preaching rigid virtue with great vehemence ? Where can we find keener satires against the prevailing corruptions of the age, and severer moral characters than those which come from the pulpit ? Yet people are not disturbed at them : nay, they are pleased with them : and the ingenious preacher gets preferment by them.

A. It is very true : but moral instructions have no weight nor influence, when they are neither supported by clear principles, nor good examples. Whom do you see converted by them ? People are accustomed to hear such harangues, and are amused by them, as with so many fine scenes passing before their eyes. They hearken to such lectures just as they would read a satire, and they look on the speaker as one that acts his part well. They believe

his* life, more than his talk : and when they know him to be selfish, ambitious, vain, given up to sloth and luxury ; and see that he parts with none of those enjoyments which he exhorts others to forsake ; though, for the sake of custom and ceremony, they hear him declaim, they believe and act as he does. But what is worst of all, people are too apt to conclude, that men of this profession do not believe what they teach—this disparages their function ; and when others preach with a sincere zeal, people will scarcely believe this zeal to be sincere.

B. I cannot but own that your notions hang well together ; and that they are very convincing when one considers them attentively. But tell me freely, does not all you have said on this subject flow from a pure zeal for christian piety ?

A. No : if an unbeliever reason justly, he must fall into the same train of thoughts ; but indeed one must have a Christian

* The clergy have one great advantage beyond all the rest of the world in this respect, besides all others, that whereas the particular callings of other men prove to them great distractions, and lay many temptations in their way, to divert them from minding their high and holy calling, of being Christians ; it is quite otherwise with the clergy : the more they follow their proper callings, they do the more certainly advance their general one ; the better priests they are, they become also the better Christians. Every part of their calling, when well performed, raises good thoughts, and brings good ideas into their minds ; and tends both to increase their knowledge, and quicken their sense of divine matters. A priest then is more accountable to God, and the world for his deportment, and will be more severely accounted with, than any other person whatsoever. He is more watched over and observed than all others. Very good men will be, even to a censure, jealous of him : very bad men will wait for his halting, and insult upon it : and all sorts of persons will be willing to defend themselves against the authority of his doctrine and admonitions, by this—he says, but does not—the world will reverse this quite, and consider rather how a clerk lives, than what he says. They see the one, and from it conclude what he himself thinks of the other : and will think themselves not a little justified, if they can say that they did no worse than they saw their minister do before them. Therefore a priest must not only abstain from gross scandals ; but keep at the farthest distance from them,—such diversions as his health or the temper of his mind may render proper for him, ought to be manly, decent, and grave ; and such as may neither possess his mind or time too much, nor give a bad character of him to his people. He must also avoid too much familiarity with bad people ; and the squandering away his time in too much vain and idle discourse. His cheerfulness ought to be frank ; but neither excessive nor licentious. His friends, and his garden, ought to be his chief diversions ; as his study, and his parish ought to be his chief employments.

Bp. Burnet's Disc. of the Pastoral Care, ch. viii.

spirit to act up to them ; for it is grace alone that can suppress the disorderly emotions of selflove. When I pressed you with the authority of Socrates and Plato, you would not resign your judgment to theirs ; and now, since reason itself begins to convince you, and that I need not enforce the truth from authorities, what if I should tell you, after all, that I have only used their arguments on this subject.

B. Is it possible ? I should be very glad of it.

A. Well then : Plato introduces Socrates discoursing with Gorgias, a famous rhetorician, and Callicles, one of his disciples. This Gorgias was Isocrates' master ; and (as Tully tells us,) he was the first man that boasted of his being able to talk eloquently on every thing, in which ridiculous vanity he was afterwards imitated by other Greek declaimers. These two men, Gorgias and Callicles, harangued plausibly enough on every subject ; being wits that shone in conversation, and had no other business but to talk finely. However, they wanted what* Socrates wished every man to have, solid principles of morality, and a sedate, just way of reasoning. Plato therefore having shewn what a ridiculous turn of mind these men had, he represents Socrates as diverting himself with their folly, and facetiously puzzling the two orators so much, that they could not tell him what eloquence is. Then he proves that rhetoric, (which was the profession of these declaimers) is not truly an art : for, according to him, 'an art is a regular discipline, which teaches men to do something that will help to make them wiser, or better than they are.' So that he allows of no other arts but the liberal ones : and he shows that even these are perverted, when they are applied to any other end besides training up men to virtue. He proves that this was not the aim of the rhetoricians : that even Themistocles and Pericles had quite other views ; and that therefore they were not truly orators. He says, those famous men only persuaded the Athenians to make harbours, and

*—*Inventi sunt qui, cum ipsi doctrina, et ingeniis abundarent, a re autem civili et negotiis, animi quodam judicio abhorerent, hanc dicendi exercitationem exagitarent, atque contemnerent. Quorum princeps Socrates fuit, is qui omnium eruditorum testimonio, totiusque judicio Graciæ, cum prudentia, et acumine, et venustate, et subtilitate, tum vero eloquentia, varietate, copia, quamcumque in partem dedisset, omnium fuit facile princeps—cujus ingenium variosque sermones immortalitati scriptis suis Plato tradidit.*

Cicero de Orat. lib. 1. § 16.

build walls, and obtain victories; they only made their citizens wealthy, warlike, and powerful; and were afterwards ill-treated for it; which was really no more than they might have expected. If they had rendered the people good and virtuous by their rhetoric, they would have been sure of a just recompense: for, he who makes men upright, and good, cannot lose the reward of his labour; seeing virtue and ingratitude are inconsistent. I need not tell you all the arguments he uses to show how useless such false rhetoric is; for, all that I have said hitherto on this point, in my own name, is really taken from him. It will be more proper to represent to you what he says of the evils that these vain haranguers occasion in the republic.

B. It is evident that such rhetoricians were dangerous in the Grecian commonwealths, where they could mislead the people; and usurp the government.

A. That is the chief danger that Socrates apprehended from them. But the principles he lays down, on this occasion, reach a great deal further. In fine, though you and I speak now of ordering a commonwealth, our inquiry and conclusions are not applicable to democracy alone; but to every kind of government, whether it be strictly a republic, an aristocracy, or a monarchy. So that the particular form of government does not enter into the present question. For in all countries, the rules of Socrates are equally useful.

C. I wish you would explain them to us.

A. He says that seeing a man is composed of a mind and a body, he ought to improve them both. Now there are two arts that concern the mind; and two others, that relate to the body. The two that belong to the mind, are moral philosophy, and the knowledge of the national laws. Under the head of moral philosophy he comprehends the laws of nature and nations; and all those dictates of philosophy that are proper to govern the inclinations and manners of the whole republic, as well as of every individual member of it. He considered the second art, as a remedy that is to be used to suppress falsehood, injustice, and the like disorders among the citizens: for, by it lawsuits are determined, and crimes are punished. So that moral philosophy serves to prevent evil, and the knowledge of the laws and constitution, to punish it. There are likewise two arts for managing the body; the gymnastic art, which by due exercise and temperance, renders it healthy, active, vigorous, and graceful; (for, you know, Sir, the ancients made a wonderful

use of this art ; which we have now quite lost ;) and the knowledge of physic which cures the body when its health is lost, or impaired. The gymnastic art assists the body, as moral philosophy doth the soul ; namely, to form and improve it : and skill in medicine is helpful to the body—as the knowledge of the laws is to the mind—for correcting and curing disorders. But this wise institution was altered, says Socrates : instead of a solid, practical philosophy, we have only the vain subtilty of wrangling sophists : a set of spurious philosophers who abuse reason : and, having no sense of public good, aim only at promoting their own selfish ends. Instead of attaining a thorough insight into the national laws, people are amused and misled by vain-glorious ostentation of these rhetoricians, who endeavour only to please and dazzle the mind : and instead of recommending the knowledge of the public constitution, and the administration of justice, (which being the medicine of the soul, should be applied to cure its disorderly passions,) these false orators think of nothing but how to spread their own reputation. And with regard to the body, says Socrates, the gymnastic art begins to be exchanged for skill in dress ; which gives the body but false, deceitful ornaments. Whereas we ought to desire only such a natural comeliness as results from health of body, and due proportion of its members, which must be acquired and preserved by temperance and exercise. The proper and seasonable use of medicine is likewise laid aside to make room for delicious dishes, and such palatable things as raise and ensnare the appetite. And instead of carrying off gross humours from the body by proper evacuations, to restore its health, nature is clogged and overcharged, and a false appetite is excited by all the various ways of luxury and intemperance. He farther observes, that those orators, who in order to cure men, should have given them bitter physic, and, with authority, have inculcated the most disagreeable truths, have on the contrary done for the mind what cooks do for the body : their rhetoric is only an art of dressing up delicacies to gratify the corrupted taste of the people. All their concern is to please and sooth them, by raising their curiosity and admiration. For, these declaimers harangue only for themselves. He concludes his remarks with asking, where are those citizens whom the rhetoricians have cured of their vicious habits ? Whom have they made sober and virtuous ? Thus Socrates describes the general disorders, and corruption of manners

that prevailed in his time. But does he not talk like* one of the present age, who observes what passes among us; and speaks of the abuses that reign in our own days? Now you have heard the sentiments of this wise heathen: what do you say of that eloquence which tends only to please, and give pretty descriptions; when (as he says) we ought to cauterize and cut to the quick: and earnestly endeavour to cure people's minds by the bitterness of remedies, and the severity of an abstemious diet? I appeal to your own judgment in this case: if you were sick, would you be pleased with a physician, who in the extremity of your illness should waste his time, and amuse you with explaining to you some fine hypothesis in an elegant style; instead of making pertinent inquiries into the cause and symptoms of your distempers, and prescribing suitable remedies? Or, in a trial at law, where your estate or your life was at stake, what would you think of your lawyer, if he should play the wit in your defence, and fill his pleading with flowers of rhetoric and quaint turns, instead of arguing with gravity, strength of reason, and earnestness, to gain your cause? Our natural love of life and well being, shows us plainly the absurdity of false oratory, and of the unseasonable ostentation of it, in such cases as I have now mentioned: but we are so strangely unconcerned about religion, and the moral conduct of life, that we do not observe the same ridicule in careless, vain-glorious orators; who yet ought to be the spiritual physicians and censors of the people. Indeed the sentiments of Socrates on this subject ought to make us ashamed.

B. I perceive clearly enough that, according to your reasoning, orators ought to be the defenders of the laws, and instructors of the people to teach them true wisdom and virtue. But among the Romans the rhetoric of the bar was otherwise employed.

A. That was certainly the end of it. For, when orators had not occasion to represent in their discourses, the general wants of

* The ornaments of speaking are much degenerated from their original usefulness. They were at first, no doubt, an admirable instrument in the hands of wise men, when they were only employed to describe goodness, honesty, obedience, in larger, fairer, and more moving images; to represent truth clothed with bodies; and to bring knowledge back again to our very senses, whence it was at first derived to our understanding. But *now* they are generally changed to worse uses: they make the *fancy* disgust the best things, if they come sound and unadorned: they are in open defiance against reason, professing not to hold much correspondence with that; but with its slaves, the passions; they give the mind a motion too changeable and bewitching; to consist with right practice.

Bishop Sprat's Hist. of R. S. p. 111, 112.

the republic, they were obliged to protect innocence, and the rights of particular persons. And it was on this account that their profession was so much honoured ; and that Tully gives us such a* lofty character of a true orator.

B. Let us hear then how orators ought to speak. I long to know your thoughts on this point ; seeing you deny the finical, florid manner of Isocrates, which is so much admired and imitated by others.

A. Instead of giving you my opinion, I shall go on to lay before you the rules that the ancients give us ; but I shall only touch upon the chief points ; for, I suppose, you do not expect that I should enter into an endless detail of the precepts of rhetoric. There are but too many useless ones ; which you must have read in those books where they are copiously explained. It will be enough if we consider the most important rules. Plato in his *Phædrus* shows us, that the greatest fault of rhetoricians is their studying the art of persuasion, before they have learned, (from the principles of true philosophy,) what those things are of which they ought to persuade men. He would have orators begin with the study of mankind in general, and then apply themselves to the knowledge of the particular genius and manners of those whom they may have occasion to instruct and persuade. So that they ought first of all to know the nature of man, his chief end, and his true interest ; the parts of which he is composed, his mind, and his body ; and the true way to make him happy. They ought likewise to understand his passions, the disorders they are subject to, and the art of governing them ; how they may be usefully raised, and employed on what is truly good ; and, in fine, the proper rules to make him live in peace, and become entirely sociable. After this general

* Neque vero mihi quidquam præstabilius videtur, quam posse dicendo tenere hominum cœtus, mentes allicere, voluntates compellere quo velit ; unde autem velit, deducere. Hæc una res in omni libero populo, maximeque in pacatis tranquillisque civitatibus præcipue semper floruit, semperque dominata est. Quid enim est aut tam admirabile, quam ex infinita multitudine hominum existere unum, qui id quod omnibus natura sit datum, vel solus, vel cum paucis facere possit ?—aut tam potens, tamque magnificum, quam populi motus, judicium religiones, senatus gravitatem, unius oratione converti ?—ac ne plura, quæ sunt pene innumerabilia, consector, comprehendam brevi : sic enim statuo, perfecti oratoris moderatione, et sapientia, non solum ipsius dignitatem, sed et privatorum plurimorum, et universæ reipublicæ salutem maxime contineri.

Cic. de Orat. lib. i. § 8.

study, comes that which is particular. Orators ought to know the laws and customs of their country ; and how far they are agreeable to the genius and temper of the people ; what are the manners of the several ranks and conditions among them ; their different ways of education ; the common prejudices and separate interests that prevail in the present age ; and the most proper way to instruct and reform the people. You see, Sir, this knowledge comprehends all the solid parts of philosophy and politics. So that Plato meant to show us that none but a philosopher can be a true orator. And it is in this sense we must understand all he says in his *Gorgias* against the rhetoricians ; I mean, that set of men who made profession of talking finely and persuading others, without endeavouring to know, from solid philosophy, what one ought to teach them. In short, according to Plato, the true art of oratory consists in understanding those useful truths of which we ought to convince people ; and the art of moving their passions, in order to persuasion. Cicero* says almost the very same things. He seems, at first, to think that an orator should know every thing ; because that he may have occasion to speak on all sorts of subjects ; and (as Socrates observed before him)† a man can never talk well on a point of which he is not entirely master. But afterwards, because of the pressing necessities and shortness of life, Tully insists only upon those parts of knowledge that he thinks the most necessary for an orator. He would have him at least well instructed in all that part of ‡ philosophy which relates to the conduct and affairs of social

* *Ac mea quidem sententia nemo poterit esse omni laude cumulatus orator, nisi erit omnium rerum magnarum, atque artium scientiam consecutus. De orat lib. 1. §. 6. Oratorem plenum atque perfectum esse eum dicam, qui de omnibus rebus possit varie copioseque dicere. Ibid. §. 13. verum enim oratori quæ sunt in hominum vita, quandoquidem in ea versetur orator, atque ea est ei subjecta materies, omnia quæsita, audita, lecta, disputata, tractata, agitata esse debent.*

Lib. iii. §. 14.

† *Etenim exerum cognitione efflorescat, et redundet oportet oratio : quæ, nisi subest res ab oratore percepta, et cognita, inanem quandam habet elocutionem, et pene puerilem.*

De Orat. lib. i. § 6.

‡ *Positum sit igitur in primis—sine philosophia non posse effici, quem quærimus eloquentem—nec vero sine philosophorum disciplina, genus, et speciem cujusque rei cernere, neque eam definiendo explicare, nec tribuere in partes possumus : nec judicare quævera, quæ falsa sint ; neque cernere consequentia, repugnantia videre, ambigua distinguere. Quid dicam de natura rerum cujus cognitio magnam orationis suppeditat copiam ? De vita, de officiis, de virtute, de moribus ?*

Orat. §. 4.

life. But above all things he would have an orator* know the frame of man, both with regard to his soul and body, and the natural tendency and force of his passions; because the great end of eloquence is to move the secret springs of them. He reckons that knowledge of the laws and constitution, to be the foundation of all public discourses: but he does not think a thorough insight into all the particular cases and questions in law to be necessary; because, upon occasion, one may have recourse to experienced lawyers, whose peculiar profession it is to understand and disentangle such intricate points. He thinks, with Plato, that an orator should be a master of reasoning; and know how to define, and argue, and unravel the most specious sophisms. He says we destroy eloquence, if we should separate it from philosophy; for then, instead of wise orators, we should have only trifling, injudicious declaimers. He further requires not only an exact knowledge of all the principles of ethics; but likewise that the orator be fully acquainted with antiquity. He re-

* Omnes animorum motus, quos hominum generi rerum natura tribuit, penitus pernoscendi.—*De Orat.* lib. i. §. 5.—Num admoveri possit oratio ad sensus animorum, atque motus vel inflammandos, vel etiam extinguendos (quod unum in oratore dominatur,) sine *diligentissima pervestigatione* earum omnium rationum quæ de *naturis* humani generis, ac moribus, a philosophis explicantur.—*De Orat.* lib. i. §. 14. Quare hic locus de vita et moribus, totus est oratori perdiscendus. *Ibid.* §. 15.

† Bibliothecas mehercule omnium philosophorum unus mihi videtur duodecim tabularum libellus, si quis *legum* fontes, et capita viderit, et auctoritatis pondere et utilitatis ubertate superare. Ac ci nos, id quod maxime debet, nostra patria delectat.—Cujus primum nobis mens, mos, disciplina nota esse debet: vel quia est patria, parens omnium nostrum, vel quia tanta sapientia fuisse in jure constituendo putanda est, quanta fuit in his tantis operibus imperii comparandis. *De Orat.* lib. i. §. 44.

‡ Nec vero dialecticis modo sit instructus, sed habeat omnes philosophiæ notos, et tractatos locos. Nihil enim de religione, nihil de morte, nihil de pietate, nihil de caritate patriæ; nihil de bonis rebus, aut malis; nihil de virtutibus, aut vitiis—nihil, inquam, sine ea scientia, quam dixi, graviter, ample, copiose dici, et explicari potest. *Orat.* §. 33.

§ Cognoscat etiam rerum gestarum et memoriæ veteris ordinem, maxime scilicet nostræ civitatis; sed et imperiosorum populorum et regum illustrium—nescire enim quid antea, quam natus sis, acciderit, id est semper esse puerum—commemoratio autem antiquitatis, exemplorumque prolatio summa cum delectatione, et auctoritatem orationi affert, et fidem. *Orat.* §. 34.—Apud Græcos autem eloquentissimi homines remoti a causis forensibus, cum ad cæteras res illustres, tum ad scribendam historiam maxime se applicaverunt. Namque et Herodotus—et post illum Thucydides omnes dicendi artificio mea sententia facile vicet—denique etiam a philosophia profectus princeps Xenophon. *De Orat.* lib. ii. §. 13, 14.

commends the careful perusal of the ancient Greek writers, especially the historians; both for their style, and for the historical facts they relate. He particularly enjoins* the study of the poets, because of the great resemblance there is betwixt the figures of poetry, and those of eloquence. In fine, he often declares that an orator ought to furnish his mind with a clear, comprehensive view of things, before he attempt to speak in public. I fancy I could almost repeat some of his words on this subject, so often have I read them, and so strong an impression did they make on my thoughts. You will be surprised to see how much knowledge, and how many† qualities he requires. ‘An orator,’ says he, ‘ought to have acuteness of logicians, the knowledge of philosophers, the style almost of the poets; the elocution and gesture of the finest actors.’ Consider now how much application must be necessary to attain all this.

C. I have observed indeed, on several occasions, that some orators, though they have good natural parts, want a fund of solid knowledge. Their heads seem unfurnished: and one cannot but perceive they labour hard for matter to fill up their discourses. They do not seem to speak from the abundance of their hearts, as if they were full of useful truths: but they talk as if they were at a loss for the very next thing they are to say.

A. Cicero takes notice of this kind of people; who live always, as it were, from hand to mouth, without laying up any stock of provision. But the discourses of such declaimers appear always thin and half-starved, whatever pains they take about them. Though these men could afford three months for studying a public harangue, such particular preparations, however troublesome, must needs be very imperfect, and any judicious hearer will easily discern their

* *Legendi etiam poetæ, cognoscenda historia, omnium bonarum artium scriptores.—De Orat. lib. i. §. 34.* Est enim finitimus oratori poeta, numeris adstrictior paulo, verborum autem licentia liberior; multis vero ornandi generibus socius ac pene par; in hoc quidem certe prope idem, nullis ut terminis circumscribat aut definiat jus suum, quo minus ei liceat eadem illa facultate, et copia vagari qua velit.

Ibid. §. 16.

† Non quæritur mobilitas linguæ, non celeritas verborum, non denique ea quæ nobis non possumus fingere, facies, vultus, sonus. In oratore autem acumen dialecticorum, sententiæ philosophorum, verba prope poetarum, memoria juris consultorum, vox tragædorum, gestus pene summorum actorum, est requirendus. Quamobrem nihil in hominum genere rarias perfecto oratore inveniri potest: quæ enim singularum rerum artifices, singula si mediocriter adepti sunt, probantur, ea nisi omnia summa sunt in oratore, probari non possunt.

De Orat. lib. i. §. 28.

defects. They ought to have employed several years in laying up a plentiful store of solid notions, and then after such a general preparation, their particular discourses would cost them but little pains. Whereas if a man, without this preparatory study, lay out all his application upon particular subjects, he is forced to put off his hearers with* florid expressions, gaudy metaphors, and jingling antitheses. He delivers nothing but indeterminate commonplace notions; and patches together shreds of learning and rhetoric which any one may see were not made one for another. He never goes to the bottom of things, but stops in superficial remarks, and oft-times in false ones. He is not able to shew truths in their proper light and full extent; because all general truths are necessarily connected among themselves: so that one must understand almost all of them, before he can treat judiciously of any one.

C. However, many of our public speakers get repute by those slight attainments you so much despise.

A. It is true, they are applauded by women and the undiscerning multitude, who are easily dazzled and imposed on: but this repute is very precarious, and could not subsist long if it were not supported by a cabal of acquaintance, and the zeal or humour of a party. They who know the true end and† rules of eloquence, can-

* There are two extremes to be avoided with the utmost care, the frigid style, and the boyish. The former renders a discourse dry and insipid, by a languor and flatness of expression: the latter renders it ungrateful and shocking, by a swelling loftiness, and affected amplification. Those who use the frigid style, employ pompous expressions when the subject requires plain ones: and they who effect the boyish style, make use of low expressions when the matter requires the loftiest. But our language is become so modest, so reserved, and so scrupulous, that the frigid style includes all such expressions as are too strong, or too sparkling; too bold and hardy metaphors, and frequent turns of wit. And the boyish style comprehends strokes of humour, and quaint conceits upon serious subjects; too loose and heavy repetitions in those parts of a discourse that ought to be close and concise; too violent exaggerations, and too laborious figures.

Rapin. Reflections sur l'Eloquence.

† Expression is the dress of thought, and still

Appears more decent, as more suitable:

A low conceit, in pompous words exprest,

Is like a clown in regal purple drest.

For different styles with different subjects sort,

As several garbs with country, town and court.

Some by old words to fame have made pretence:

Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense!

Such labour'd nothings, in so strange a style,

Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile.—POPE.

not hear such empty, vain harangues without satiety, disgust and contempt.

C. It seems then you would have a man wait several years before he attempt to speak in public ; for the flower of his age must be spent in attaining that vast fund of knowledge you reckon necessary to an orator, and then he must be so far advanced in years, that he will have but little time to exert his talents.

A. I would have him begin to exert them betimes : for I know very well how great the power of action is. But under the pretence of exercising his parts, I would not have him immediately engage himself in any kind of employment that will take off his mind from his studies. A youth may try his skill, from time to time : but for several years, a careful perusal of the best authors ought to be his main business.

C. Your judicious observation puts me in mind of a preacher I am acquainted with, who lives, as you say, from hand to mouth ; and never thinks of any subject till he be obliged to treat of it ; and then he shuts himself up in his closet, turns over his concordance, combefix, and polyanthea, his collections of sermons, and common-place book of separate sentences and quotations that he has gathered together.

A. You cannot but perceive, Sir, that this method will never make him an able, judicious preacher. In such cases, a man cannot talk with strength and clearness ; he is not sure of any thing he says, nor doth any thing flow easily from him. His whole discourse has a borrowed air, and looks like an awkward piece of patchwork. Certainly those are much to be blamed, who are so impatiently fond of showing their parts.

B. Before you leave us, Sir, pray tell us what you reckon the chief effect of eloquence.

A. Plato says an oration is so far eloquent as it effects the hearer's mind. By this rule you may judge certainly of any discourse you hear ; if an harangue leave you cold and languid, and only amuses your mind, instead of enlightening it, if it does not move your heart and passions, however florid and pompous it may be, it is not truly eloquent. Tully approves of Plato's sentiments on this point ; and tells us* that the whole drift and force of a discourse should tend to move those secret springs of action that nature has placed in the hearts of men. Would you then consult your own

* Lib. i. §. 5. lib. ii. §. 82.

mind to know whether those you hear be truly eloquent? If they make a lively impression upon you, and gain your attention and assent to what they say; if they move and animate your passions, so as to* raise you above yourself, you may be assured they are true orators. But if instead of affecting you thus, they only please or divert you, and make you admire the brightness of their thoughts, or the beauty and propriety of their language, you may freely pronounce them to be mere declaimers.

B. Stay a little, Sir, if you please, till I ask you a few more questions.

A. I wish I could stay longer, gentlemen, for your conversation is very engaging: but I have an affair to despatch which will not admit of a delay. To-morrow I will wait on you again; and then we shall finish this subject at our leisure.

B. Adieu, then, Sir, till to-morrow.

THE SECOND DIALOGUE.

B. You are extremely kind, Sir, in coming so punctually. Your conversation yesterday was so agreeably instructive, that we longed impatiently to hear you again upon the same subject.

C. For my part, I made what haste I could, lest I should have come too late; for I was unwilling to lose any part of your discourse.

A. Such conferences are very useful, among those who really love truth, and talk with temper; for then they exchange their best thoughts, and express them as clearly as they can. As for myself, gentlemen, I find an advantage in conversing with you; seeing you are not displeased at the freedom I take.

B. Let us leave off compliments, Sir, I know best how to judge of myself; and I perceive clearly that without your assistance I should have continued in several errors. I entreat you, Sir, to go on, and set me entirely right in my notions of eloquence.

A. Your mistakes, (if you will allow me to call them so,) prevail among most people of worth and learning who have not examined this matter to the bottom.

* See Longinus. §. vii.

B. Let us lose no time in preamble : we shall have a thousand things to say. Proceed therefore, Sir, to rectify my mistakes, and begin at the point where we left off yesterday.

A. Of what point were we talking, when we parted ? I have really forgot.

C. You were speaking of that kind of eloquence which consists entirely in moving the passions.

B. Yes : but I could not well comprehend that the whole design of rhetoric is to move the passions. Is that your opinion, Sir ?

A. By no means.

C. It seems then I mistook you yesterday.

A. What would you say of a man who should persuade without any proof, and affect his hearers, without enlightening them ? You could not reckon him a true orator. He might seduce people by this art of persuading them to what he would, without showing them that what he recommends is right. Such a person must prove very dangerous in the commonwealth : as we have seen before from the reasoning of Socrates.

B. It is very true.

A. But on the other hand, what would you think of a man, who in his public discourses should demonstrate the truth, in a plain, dry, exact, methodical manner ; or make use of the geometrical way of reasoning, without adding any thing to adorn or enliven his discourse ? Would you reckon him an orator ?

B. No : I should think him a philosopher only.

A. To make a complete orator then, we must find a philosopher who knows both how to demonstrate any truth ; and at the same time, to give his accurate reasoning all the natural beauty and vehemence of an agreeable, moving discourse, to render it entirely eloquent. And herein lies the difference betwixt the clear, convincing method of philosophy ; and the affecting, persuasive art of eloquence.

C. What do you say is the difference ?

A. I say a philosopher's aim is merely to demonstrate the truth, and gain your assent ; while the orator not only convinces your judgment, but commands your passions.

C. I do not take your meaning exactly yet. When a hearer is fully convinced, what is there more to be done ?

A. There is still wanting what an orator would do more than a metaphysician, in proving the existence of a God. The metaphy-

sician would give you a plain demonstration of it; and stop at the speculative view of that important truth. But the orator would further add whatever is proper to excite the most affecting sentiments in your mind: and make you love that glorious Being whose existence he had proved. And this is what we call persuasion.

C. Now I understand you perfectly well.

A. You see then what reason Cicero had to say, that we must never separate philosophy from eloquence. For, the art of persuading without wisdom, and previous instruction, must be pernicious: and wisdom alone, without the art of persuasion, can never have a sufficient influence on the minds of men, nor allure them to the love and practice of virtue. I thought it proper to observe this by the by, to show you how much those of the last age were mistaken in their notions of this matter. For, on the one hand there were some men of polite learning, who valued nothing but the purity of languages, and books elegantly written: but having no solid principles of knowledge, with their politeness and erudition, they were generally libertines. On the other hand, they were a set of dry, formal scholars, who delivered their instructions in such a perplexed, dogmatical, unaffecting manner, as disgusted every body. Excuse this digression. I return now to the point; and must remind you that persuasion has this advantage beyond mere conviction or demonstration; that it not only sets truth in the fullest light, but represents it as amiable; and engages men to love and pursue it.* The whole art of eloquence, therefore, consists in enforcing the clearest proofs of any truth, with such powerful motives as may affect the hearers, and employ their passions to just and worthy ends, to raise their indignation at ingratitude, their horror against cruelty, their compassion for the miserable, their love of virtue; and to direct every other passion to its proper objects. This is what Plato calls affecting the minds of an audience, and moving their bowels. Do you understand me, Sir?

B. Very plainly: and I see too that eloquence is not a trifling invention to amuse and dazzle people with pompous language; but that it is a very serious art, and serviceable to morality.

*—*Omnes animorum motus, quos hominum generi rerum natura tribuit, penitus pernoscendi; quod omnis vis ratioque dicendi in eorum qui audiunt, mentibus aut sedandis, aut excitandis, exprimenda est. Cic. De Orat. lib. i. §. 5. Maximaque pars orationis admovenda est ad animorum motus nonnunquam aut cohortatione, aut commemoratione, aliqua, aut in spem, aut in metum, aut ad cupiditatem, aut ad gloriam concitandos: sæpe etiam a temeritate, iracundia, spe, injuria, credulitate revocandos. Ibid. lib. ii. §. 82.*

A. It is both a serious and a difficult art. For which reason Tully said he had heard several persons declaim in an elegant, engaging manner; but that there were but very few complete orators, who knew how to seize and captivate the heart.

C. I am not surprised at that; for I see but very few who aim at it: nay, I freely own that Cicero himself who lays down this rule, seems oftentimes to forget it. What do you think of those rhetorical flowers with which he embellished his harangues? They might amuse the fancy, but could not touch the heart.

A. We must distinguish, Sir, betwixt Tully's orations. Those he composed in his youth (when he chiefly aimed at establishing his character,) have oft-times the gay defect you speak of. He was then full of ambition, and far more concerned for his own fame, than for the justice of his cause. And this will always be the case when people employ one to plead for them, who regards their business no farther than as it gives him an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and of shining in his profession. Thus we find that among the Romans their pleading at the bar was oft-times nothing else but a pompous declamation. After all, we must own that Tully's* youthful and most elaborate orations show a great deal of his moving and persuasive art. But to form a just notion of it, we must observe the harangues he made in his more advanced age

* Nunc causa perorata, res ipsa et periculi magnitudo, C. Aquilli, cogere videtur, ut te, atque eos, qui tibi in consilio sunt, obsecret, obtesteturque P. Quintius per senectutem ac solitudinem suam, nihil aliud, nisi ut vestræ naturæ, bonitatique obsequamini: ut, cum veritas hæc faciat, plus hujus inopia possit ad misericordiam quam illius opes ad crudelitatem—si quæ pudore ornamenta sibi peperit, Nævi, ea potest contra petulantiam, te defendente, obtinere: spes est et hunc miserum atque infelicem aliquando tandem posse consistere. Sin et poterit Nævius id quod libet; et ei libebit, quod non licet; quid agendum est? Qui Deus appellandus est? Cujus hominis fides imploranda?—Ab ipso [Nævio] repudiatus, ab amicis ejus non sublevatus; ab omni ministratu agitatus atque perterritus, quem præter te appellet, [C. Aquilli] habet neminem; tibi see, tibi suas omnes opes fortunasque commendat: tibi committit existimationem ac spem reliquæ vitæ. Multis vexatus contumeliis, plurimis jactatus injuriis non *turpis* ad te, sed *miser* confugit; e fundo ornatissimo dejectus, ignominiis omnibus appetitus—itaque te hoc obsecrat, C. Aquilli, ut quam existimationem, quam honestatem injudicium tuum, prope acta jam ætate decursaque attulit, eam liceat ei secum ex hoc loco efferre; ne is, de cujus officio nemo unquam dubitavit, sexagesimo denique anno, dedecore, macula, turpissimaque ignominia notetur; ne ornamentis ejus omnibus, Sex. Nævius pro speliis abutatur: ne per te ferat, quo minus, quæ existimatio P. Quintium usque ad senectutem perduxit, eadem usque ad rogam prosequatur.

Cic. Orat. pro. P. Quintio.

for the necessities of the republic. For then, the experience he had in the weightiest affairs, the love of liberty, and the fear of those calamities that hung over his head, made him display the utmost efforts of his eloquence. When he endeavoured to support and revive expiring liberty, and to animate the commonwealth against Antony his enemy, you do not see him use points of wit and quaint antitheses; he is then truly eloquent. Every thing seems artless, as it ought to be when one is vehement. With a negligent air he delivers the most natural and affecting sentiments, and says every thing that can move and animate the passions.

C. You have often spoke of witty conceits and quaint turns. Pray, what do you mean by these expressions? For I can scarce distinguish those witty turns from the other ornaments of discourse. In my opinion, all the embellishments of speech flow from wit, and a vigorous fancy.

A. But Tully thinks, there are many expressions that owe all their beauty and ornament to their force and propriety; and to the nature of the subject they are applied to.

C. I do not exactly understand these terms: be pleased to show me in a familiar way, how I may readily distinguish betwixt a flash of wit, or (quaint turn,) and a solid ornament, or* noble, delicate thought.

A. Reading and observation will teach you best; there are a hundred different sorts of witty conceits.

C. But pray, Sir, tell me at least some general mark by which I may know them: is it affectation?

A. Not every kind of affectation: but a fond desire to please, and show one's wit.

C. This gives me some little light; but I want still some distinguishing marks, to direct my judgment.

A. I will give you one then, which perhaps will satisfy you. We have seen that eloquence consists not only in giving clear, convincing proofs; but likewise in the art of moving the passions. Now

* True wit is *nature* to advantage dress'd,
 What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;
 Something, whose *truth* convinc'd at sight we find,
 That gives us back the image of our mind.
 As shades more sweetly recommend the light:
 So *modest plainness* sets off *sprightly wit*.
 For works may have more wit than does them good,
 As bodies perish through excess of blood.

in order to move them, we must be able to paint them well, with their various objects and effects. So that I think the whole art of oratory may be reduced to proving, painting, and raising the passions. Now all those pretty, sparkling, quaint thoughts, that do not tend to one of these ends, are only witty conceits.

C. What do you mean by painting? I never heard that term applied to rhetoric.

A. To* paint, is not only to describe things, but to represent the circumstances of them, in such a lively, sensible manner, that the hearer shall fancy he almost sees them with his eyes. For instance, if a dry historian were to give an account of Dido's death, he would only say, she was overwhelmed with sorrow after the departure of Æneas; and that she grew weary of her life, so went up to the top of her palace, and lying down on her funeral pile, she stabbed herself. Now these words would inform you of the fact: but you do not see it. When you read the story in Virgil, he sets it before your eyes. When he represents all the circumstances of Dido's despair, describes her wild rage, and death already staring in her aspect; when he makes her speak at the sight of the picture and sword that Æneas left, your imagination transports you to Carthage, where you see the Trojan fleet leaving the shore, and the queen quite inconsolable. You enter into all her passions, and into the sentiments of the supposed spectators. It is not Virgil you then hear; you are too attentive to the last words of unhappy Dido, to think of him. The poet disappears: and we see only what he describes; and hear those only whom he makes to speak. Such is the force of a natural imitation, and of painting in language. Hence it comes that the painters and the poets are so nearly related; the one paints for the eyes, and the other for the ears; but both of them ought to convey the liveliest pictures to peoples' imagination. I have taken an example from a poet to give you a livelier image of what I mean by painting in eloquence, for poets paint in a stronger manner than orators. Indeed the main thing in which poetry dif-

* See Longinus §. xv.

† Plus est evidentia, vel ut alii dicunt, repræsentatio, quam perspicuitas: et illud quidem patet: hæc se quodammodo ostendit—magna virtus est, res de quibus loquimur, clare atque ut *cerni videantur*, enunciare. Non enim satis efficit, neque ut debet plene dominatur oratio, si usque ad aures volet, atque ea sibi iudex de quibus cognoscit, *narrari* credit, non *exprimi*, et *oculis mentis ostendi*—atque hujus summae, iudicio quidem meo, virtutis facillima est via. *Naturam* intueamur, hanc *sequamur*. Quintil. lib. viii. c. 3.

fers from eloquence is, that the poet paints with enthusiasm and gives bolder touches than the orator. But prose allows of painting in a moderate degree; for, without lively descriptions it is impossible to warm the hearer's fancy, or to stir his passions. A plain narrative does not move people; we must not only inform them of facts, but* strike their senses, by a lively, moving representation of the manner and circumstances of the facts we relate.

C. I never reflected on this before. But seeing what you call painting is essential to oratory; does it not follow that there can be no true eloquence, without a due mixture of poetry?

A. You are right: only we must exclude versification; that is, a strict regard to the quantity of syllables, and the order of words in which the poet is obliged to express his thoughts, according to the measure or verse he writes in. Versification, indeed, if it be in rhyme, is what injudicious people reckon to be the whole of poetry. Some fancy themselves to be poets, because they have spoken or writ in measured words: but there are many who make verses without poetry, and others are very† poetical without making verses. If therefore we set versifying aside, poetry in other respects is only a lively fiction that paints nature. And if one has not this genius for painting, he will never be able to imprint things on the hearer's mind; but his discourse will be flat, languid and wearisome. Ever since the fall of Adam, men's thoughts have been so low and grovelling, that they are unattentive to moral truths, and can scarce conceive any thing but what affects their senses. In

* Τῆς δὲ ῥητορικῆς Φαντασίας κάλλιστον αἰεὶ τὸ ἔμπρακτον καὶ ἐνάληθες.— Καλεῖται μὲν γὰρ κοινῶς Φαντασία πᾶν ἐννόημα λόγῳ γεννητικὸν ὁπασοῦν παριστάμενον· ἰδίως δ' ἐπὶ τέτῳν κεκράτηκε τῆνομα, ὅταν ἂν λέγῃς ὑπὸ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ πάθος βλέπειν δοκῇ, καὶ ὑπ' ὧν τιθῇ τοῖς ἀπέχουσιν—Τί ἔν ἡ ῥητορικὴ Φαντασία δύναται; πολλὰ μὲν ἴσως καὶ ἄλλα τοῖς λόγοις ἐναγώνια καὶ ἐμπαθῆ προσισφύρειν· καλὰ κινεαμένη μέντοι ταῖς πραγματικαῖς ἐπιχειρήσεσιν, ἐ τέθεικε τὸν ἀκροατὴν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ δουλεῖται.

Longinus, § xv.

† The adventures of Telemachus, composed by our ingenious author, are intirely written in that poetic prose he here speaks of. M. Bossu, the greatest modern critic, does not think that work can be called a poem: but he owns the distinction that our author here takes notice of. 'There is good reason, (says he,) to distinguish such artless composures (turned into verse) from true poetry, by giving them the name of versification; and to make of versification and poetry, as it were, two different arts. And indeed, is there a greater difference betwixt grammar and rhetoric, than betwixt the art of making verses, and that of inventing a poem?' *Traite du poeme epique.* liv. i. ch. 5.

this consists the degeneracy of human nature. People grow soon weary of contemplation ; intellectual ideas do not strike their imagination, so that we must use sensible and* familiar images to support their attention, and convey abstracted truths to their minds. Hence it came, that, soon after the fall, the religion of all the ancients consisted of poetry and idolatry ; which were always joined together in their various schemes of superstition. But let us not wander too far—you see plainly that poetry, I mean, the lively painting of things, is, as it were, the very soul of eloquence.

C. But if true orators be poets, I should think that poets are orators too : for poetry is very proper to persuade.

A. Yes : they have the very same end. All the difference betwixt them consists in what I have told you. Orators are not possessed with that enthusiasm which fires the poet's breast, and renders him more lively, more sublime, and bolder in expression. You remember the passage I quoted from Cicero.

C. Which ? is it not—

A. That an orator ought to have the style almost of a poet ; that almost points out the difference between them.

C. I understand you. But you do not come to the point you proposed to explain to us.

A. Which ?

C. The rule for distinguishing betwixt witty turns and solid ornaments.

A. You will soon comprehend that. For of what use in discourse can any ornament be, that does not tend either to prove, to paint, or to affect ?

C. It may serve to please.

A. We must distinguish here between such ornaments as only please, and those that both please and persuade. That which serves to please in order to persuade, is good and solid ; thus we are pleased with strong and clear arguments. The just and natural emotions of an orator have much grace and beauty in them ; and his exact and lively painting charms us. So that all the necessary parts of eloquence are apt to please, but yet pleasing is not their true aim. The question is, whether we shall approve such thoughts and expressions as may perhaps give an amusing delight ; but in other respects, are altogether useless : and these I call quaint turns, and points of wit. You must remember now that I allow all those

* *Respicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubebo*

Doctum imitatore, et veras hinc ducere voces.

graces of style, and delicate thoughts that tend to persuasion ; I only reject those vain, affected ornaments that the self-conceited author uses, to paint his own character, and amuse others with his wit, instead of filling their minds entirely with his subject. In fine, I think we ought to condemn not only all jingle and playing with words, as a thing extremely mean and boyish ; but even all witty conceits, and fanciful turns ; I mean, such thoughts as only flash and glitter upon the fancy, but contain nothing that is solid, and conducive to persuasion.

C. I could agree to that, but that I am afraid such severity would retrench the chief beauties of discourse.

A. Do not you reckon Homer and Virgil very agreeable authors ? Are they not the most delicate you ever read ? And yet in them you do not find what we call points of wit. Their poems are full of noble simplicity ; their art is entirely concealed ;* nature itself appears in all that they say. We do not find a single word that seems purposely designed to show the poet's wit. They thought it their greatest glory never to appear, but to employ our attention on the objects they describe ; as a painter endeavours to set before your eyes wide forests, mountains, rivers, distant views, and buildings ; or the adventures, actions, and different passions of men, in such a lively manner, that you cannot trace the masterly strokes of his pencil ; for art looks mean and coarse when it is perceived. Plato (who had examined this matter more thoroughly than any other orator, or critic,) assures us that in composing, the poet should always keep out of sight, make himself be quite forgot by his readers, and represent only those things and persons which he would set before their eyes. You see how much the ancients excelled us in just and lofty sentiments.

B. I see the use and necessity of painting, in eloquence ; let us next know the nature and use of those affecting movements you spoke of.

A. They serve to raise in the hearer's mind, such emotions as answer the orator's purpose.

* When first young *Maro* sung of kings and wars,
'Ere warning Phœbus touch'd his trembling ears,
Perhaps he seem'd above the critic's law,
And but from nature's fountains scorn'd to draw :
But when t' examine every part he came,
Nature and *Homer*, were, he found, the same.
Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem ;
To copy nature is to copy them. POPE.

C. But in what do these movements of an orator consist?

A. In his words, and in the actions of his body.

B. What movement can there be in words?

A. A great deal. Tully tells us, that the very enemies of Gracchus could not forbear weeping when* he pronounced these words—'Miserable man that I am! Whither shall I turn myself? Where can I go? to the Capitol? It swims with my brother's blood. Shall I go to my own house? There see my unhappy mother dissolved in tears, and oppressed with sorrow?' This is moving language. But now if one were to say the same things in a cold manner, they would lose all their force.

B. Think you so?

A. Let us try. 'I know not where to go, nor whither I should turn myself, amidst my misfortunes. The Capitol is the place where my brother's blood was shed; and at home, I shall see my unhappy mother lamenting her condition, with the utmost grief.' This is the same thing that was said before: but what has become of that force and vivacity we then perceived? Where is that† vehement manner, and abrupt language which so justly describes nature in the transports of grief? The manner of saying a thing shows us how it affects the mind: and that is what most effectually touches the hearer. In such passages, one ought studiously to avoid all refined, uncommon thoughts; and even neglect connexion and order: otherwise the passion described has no appearance of truth, or nature, in it. Nothing is more shocking than a passion expressed in beautiful figures, pompous language, and well turned periods. On this head I must recommend‡ Longinus to you, who quotes many sublime examples from Demosthenes and others.

C. Besides the movements that attend an affecting, vehement style, you mentioned others that flow from the orator's gesture and action: which I must entreat you to explain.

A. I cannot pretend to give you a complete system of rhetoric. It is a task I am not fit for. However, I shall give you some re-

* Quid fuit in *Graccho*, quem tu, *Catule*, melius meministi, quod me puero tantopere ferretur? quo me miser conferam? quo vertam? in *Capitoliumne?* at fratris sanguine redundat. An domum? matremne ut miseram lamentantemque videam, et abjectam? quæ sic ab illo acta esse constabat oculis, voce, gestu, inimici ut lachrymas tenere non possent. Hæc eo dico pluribus, quod genus hoc totum oratores, qui sunt veritatis ipsiis actores reliquerunt; imitatores autem veritatis, histriones, occupaverunt. *Cic. de Orat. lib. iii. §. 56.*

† See *Longinus*, §. xviii.

‡ See *Longinus*, §. xviii, xix, xx, xxi.

márks I have made on the point of gesture, we find in Tully and* Quintilian that the action of the Greeks and Romans was far more violent than ours. They stamped on the ground, and even beat their forehead. Tully mentions an orator, who in his pleading laid hold of his client, and tore open his clothes, to show the judges the wounds he had received in the service of the republic. This was a vehement kind of action indeed; but such as is reserved for extraordinary occasions, and doth not fall within the common rules of gesture. I think it is not natural to be always moving one's arm in talking; that† motion is proper enough when the orator is very vehement: but he ought not to move his arm in order to appear vehement. Nay there are many things that ought to be pronounced calmly, and without any motion.

B. Would you have a preacher, for instance, use no gesture at all on some occasions? that would look very strange indeed.

A. I know that most people lay it down for a rule, (or a custom at least,) that a preacher should be always in motion, whatever the subject be that he treats of. But it might be easily shown that our [French] preachers usually have too much gesture, and sometimes too little.

B. I wish you would state this manner clearly. For I always believed, from the example of*** that there are not above two or three motions of the hands to be used in a whole sermon.

A. Let us then lay down some principle to argue upon. Now of what use is the‡ action of the body in speaking? Is it not to express the sentiments and passions of the mind?

B. I think so.

* Femur ferire, quod Athenis primus fecisse creditur Cleon, et usitatum est, et indignatos decet, et excitat auditorem. Idque in Callidio Cicero desiderat. *Non frons, inquit, percussa? non femur? pedum nulla suppositio? Quint.*

† Brachii moderata projectio remissis humeris, atque explicantibus se in proferenda manu digitis, continuos et decurrentes locos maxime decet. *Ibid.*

‡ Actio inquam in dicendo una dominatur: sine hac summus orator esse in numero nullo potest: mediocris, hac instructus summos sæpe superare. Huic primas dedisse Demosthenes dicitur, quum rogaretur quid in dicendo esset primum; huic secundas; huic tertias. *De Orat. lib. iii. § 56.* Est enim actio quasi sermo corporis; quo magis menti congrua esse debet—atque in iis omnibus quae sunt actionis, inest quaedam vis a natura data; quare etiam hac imperiti, hac vulgus, hac denique barbari maxime commoventur—iisdem enim omnium animi motibus concinantur, et eos iisdem notis, et in aliis agnoscunt, et in se ipsi indicant. *Ibid. § 54.*

A. The motion of the body then should help to paint the thoughts of the soul.

B. Yes.

A. And that painting ought to be exact and* faithful. Every look and motion should, in an easy, natural manner, represent the speaker's sentiments, and the nature of the things he says; but so as to avoid all mean and theatrical gestures.

B. I think I understand your notion exactly. Let me interrupt you then a little, that you may see how far I enter into the consequences that flow from the principle you laid down. You† would have an orator use such a lively, natural, becoming action, as will help to point out distinctly what his words alone could express only in a flat and languid manner. So that you reckon his very action a sort of painting.

A. Right. But we must farther conclude that to paint well, we must imitate nature; and observe what she does when she is left to herself; and is not constrained by art.

B. That is plain.

A. Now doth a man naturally use many gestures when he says common things, without vehemence, or the least mixture of any sort of passion?

B. No.

A. On such common subjects, then, we ought not to use any action in public discourses, or at least but little; for there we ought always to‡ follow nature; nay, there are some occasions where an orator might best express his thoughts by silence. For, if, being full of some great sentiment, he continued immoveable for a mo-

* Omnis enim motus animi suum quendam a natura habet vultum et sonum, et gestum; totumque corpus hominis, et ejus omnis vultus omnesque voces, ut nervi in fidibus, ita sonant, ut a motu animi quoque sint pulsæ. *Cicero.*

† Gestus quantum habeat in oratore momenti, satis vel ex eo patet quod plerumque etiam citra verba significat. Quippe non manus solum, sed nutus etiam declarant nostram voluntatem; et in mutis pro sermone sunt—contra si gestus ac vultus ab oratione dissentiat, tristitia dicamus hilares, affirmemus aliqua renuentes, non auctoritas modo verbis, sed etiam fides desit.

Quint. lib. xi. c. 3.

‡ Unum jam his adjiciendum est, cum præcipue in actione spectetur decorum, sæpe aliud alios decere. Est enim latens quaedam in hoc ratio, et inenarrabilis; et ut vere hoc dictum est caput esse artis, decere quod facias—quare norit se quisque; nec tantum ex communibus præceptis, sed etiam ex natura sua capiat consilium formande actionis.

Quint. lib. xi. c. 3.

ment, this surprising pause would keep the minds of the audience in suspense, and express an emotion too big for words to utter.

B. I doubt not but such unexpected pauses seasonably employed, would be very significant, and powerfully affect the hearers. But, Sir, you seem to think that one who speaks in public ought to use no other action than what is proper for ordinary conversation.

A. You mistake me, Sir; I think the sight of a great assembly, and the importance of the subject an orator treats of, ought to animate him far more than if he were talking familiarly with his friends. But both in private and in public, he ought always to act naturally. He should use some action when his words are moving; but when his expressions are quite calm and simple, there is no occasion to move the body: except it be in the gentlest manner. Nothing appears more shocking and absurd, than to see a man very warm and active, when he is saying the driest, coldest things. Though he sweats himself, he chills the blood of his audience. Sometime ago, I happened to fall asleep at a sermon; * * * * * but I soon waked and found the preacher in a very violent agitation, so that I fancied, at first, that he was pressing some important point of morality—

B. What was the matter then?

A. He was only giving notice that on the Sunday following he would preach upon repentance. I was extremely surprised to hear such an indifferent thing uttered with so much vehemence. * * * * * The pronunciation of these declaimers is exactly like their gesture; for as their voice is a perpetual monotony, so there is an* uniformity in their gesture that is no less nauseous and unnatural; and

* In the delivering of sermons, a great composure of gesture and behaviour is necessary to give them weight and authority. Extremes are bad here, as in every thing else. Some affect a light and flippant behaviour; and others think that wry faces, and a tone in the voice will set off the matter. Grave and composed looks, and a natural, but distinct pronunciation, will always have the best effects. The great rule which the masters of rhetoric press much, can never be enough remembered, that to make a man speak well, and pronounce with a right *emphasis*, he ought thoroughly to understand all that he says, be fully persuaded of it, and bring himself to have those affections which he desires to infuse into others. He that is persuaded of the truth of what he says, and has a concern about it in his mind, will pronounce with a natural vehemence that is far more lively than all the strains that art can lead him to. An orator, (if we hearken to them) must be an honest man; and speak always on the side of truth; and study to feel all that he says; and then he will speak it so as to make others feel it likewise. *Discourse of the Pastoral Care.* c. ix.

equally contrary to the good effect that one might expect from decent action.

B. You said that sometimes they have not action enough.

A. We cannot wonder at that. For they do not discern the things that require warmth and earnestness. They waste their spirits in saying the plainest things; and so are forced to utter those things faintly which ought to be delivered with a vehement action. I must own indeed that the French are not very capable of this vehemence; for, they are too airy, and do not conceive things with sufficient strength; and therefore they do not speak with a proper energy. The Romans had a wonderful talent this way, and the Greeks a greater. The eastern nations excelled in it; and particularly the Hebrews. Nothing can equal the strength and vivacity of the figures they employed in their discourse; and the very actions they used to express their sentiments; such as putting ashes on their heads, and tearing their garments, and covering themselves with sackcloth, under any deep distress and sorrow of mind. I do not speak of what the prophets did to give a more lively representation of the things they foretold, because such figurative actions were the effect of divine inspiration. But even in other cases, we find that those people understood much better than we do, how to express their grief, and fear, and other passions. And hence, no doubt, arose those surprising effects of eloquence, which we never experience now.

B. You approve then of many different gestures, and* various inflections of the voice?

A. It is that variety which gives so much grace and force to the action of an orator; and made Demosthenes far excel all others. The more easy and familiar that the voice and action appear, when the speaker only narrates, explains, or instructs, the more apt he will be to surprise and move the audience in those parts of his discourse, where he grows suddenly vehement, and enforces lofty, affecting sentiments by a suitable energy of voice and action.

* In omni voce, est quiddam medium; sed suum cuique; hinc gradatim ascendere vocem utile, et suave est; (nam a principio clamare agreste quiddam est:) et illud idem ad formandum est vocem salutare; deinde est quiddam contentius extremum—est item contra quiddam in remissione gravissimum, quoque tamquam sonorum gradibus descenditur. Hæc varietas, et hic per omnes sonos vocis cursus, et se tuebitur, et actioni afferet suavitatem.

Cic. de Orat. lib. iii. § 61.

This due* pronunciation is a kind of music; whose beauty consists in the variety of proper tones and inflections of the voice, which ought to rise or fall with a just and easy cadence, according to the nature of the things we express. It gives a light as well as a grace to language; and is the very life and spirit of discourse.

B. According to your notions of elocution, it is an art unknown to our greatest orators. The preacher that you and I heard, about fortnight ago, did not observe your rule; nor even seem to endeavour it. Except the first thirty words of his sermon, he spake always in the same tone; and the only sign I could perceive of his being more vehement in some parts of his discourse, than in others, was, that when he seemed earnest, he spoke faster than at other times.

A. To me, Sir, his voice seemed to have two tones; though they were well adapted to his words. You observed justly enough that he did not follow the rules of pronunciation; and I believe he did not perceive the need of them. His voice is naturally melodious; and though it be ill managed, it is however pleasing enough. But you see plainly that it does not make those strong, affecting impressions on the mind that it would produce, if it had such various inflections as are proper to express the speaker's sentiments. Such preachers are like fine clocks, that give a clear, full, soft, agreeable sound; but after all they are clocks only, of no significancy; and having no variety of notes, they are incapable of harmony or eloquence.

B. But were there not many graces in the rapidity of his discourse?

* Ornata est pronuntiatio, cui suffragatur vox facilis, magna, beata, flexibilis, firma, dulcis, durabilis, clara, pura, secans æra, auribus sedens. Est enim quædam ad auditum accommodata, non magnitudine sed proprietate, ad hoc velut tractabilis; utique habens omnes in se qui desiderantur sonos *intentionesque*, et toto ut aiunt organo instructa—illud vero maximum, quod secundum *rationem rerum* de quibus dicimus, animorumque habitus, *conformanda vox* est, ne ab oratione discordet. Vitemus igitur illam quæ *Græce πορροσία* vocatur, una quædam spiritus ac soni intentio: non solum ne dicamus clamose, quod insanum est; aut intra loquendi modum, quod motu caret; aut summisso murmure, quo etiam debilitatur omnis intentio: sed ut in iisdem partibus, iisdemque affectibus, sint tamen quædam non ita magnæ vocis *declinationes*, prout aut verborum dignitas, aut sententiarum natura, aut depositio, aut inceptio, aut transitus postulat; ut qui singulis pinxerunt coloribus, alia tamen eminentiora, aliareductiora fecerunt; sine quo ne membris quidem suas lineas dissident.

Quint. lib. xi. c. 3.

A. Yes; and I grant that in some affecting, lively passages one ought to speak faster than usual. But it is a great fault to speak with so much precipitation that one cannot stop himself, nor be distinctly understood. The voice and action bear some resemblance to verse. Sometimes we must use such a slow, and grave measure, as is fit to describe things of that character; and sometimes a short impetuous one, to express what is quick and ardent. To use always the same degree of action, and the same tone of voice, is like prescribing one remedy for all distempers. But we ought to excuse the uniformity of that preacher's voice and action. For, besides his possessing many excellent qualities, the fault we complain of, is the natural effect of his style. We have already agreed that the modulation of the voice should be exactly suited to the words. Now his style is even, and uniform, without the least variety. On the one hand, it is not familiar, insinuating, and popular; and, on the other, it has nothing in it that is lively, figurative, and sublime; but it consists of a constant flow of words, that press one after the other; containing a close and well-connected chain of reasoning, on clear ideas. In a word, he is a man that talks good sense very correctly. Nay, we must acknowledge that he has done great service to the pulpit; he has rescued it from the servitude of vain declaimers, and filled it himself with much strength and dignity. He is very capable of convincing people; but I know few preachers who persuade and move them less than he doth. If you observe carefully, you will even find that his way of preaching is not very instructive, for besides his not having a familiar, engaging, pathetic manner of talking, (as I observed before,) his discourse does not in the least* strike the imagination, but is addressed to

* The senses and the imagination are fruitful and inexhaustible sources of mistakes and delusion; but the understanding or mind acting by itself, is not so subject to error—we cannot always speak so as to affect the senses and imagination of others; nor ought we always to endeavour it. When a subject is *abstracted*, we can seldom render it *sensible* (or apt to strike the imagination,) without making it obscure; it is enough if it be made *intelligible*. Nothing can be more unjust than the usual complaints of those who would know every thing, and yet will not apply themselves to any thing. They take it amiss when we require their attention; and expect that we should always *strike* their fancy, and continually please their senses, and their passions. But it is not in our power to gratify them. The authors of romances and comedies are obliged thus to please and amuse them; but as for us, it is enough if we can instruct those who are truly attentive.

the understanding only. It is a thread of reasoning that cannot be comprehended without the closest attention. And seeing there are but few hearers capable of such a constant application of mind, they retain little or nothing of his discourse. It is like a torrent that hurries along at once, and leaves its channel dry. In order to make a lasting impression on people's minds, we must support their attention, by moving their passions; for dry instructions can have but little influence. But the thing that I reckon least natural in this preacher, is the continual motion he gives his arms, while there is nothing figurative, nor moving in his words. The action used in ordinary conversation, would suit his style best; or his impetuous gesture would require a style full of sallies and vehemence; and even then he behaved to manage his warmth better, and render it less uniform. In fine, I think he is a great man—but not an orator. A country preacher who can alarm his hearers, and draw tears from them, answers the end of eloquence better than he.

B. But how shall we know the particular gestures, and the inflections of voice that are agreeable to nature?

A. I told you before that the whole art of good orators consists in observing what nature does when unconstrained. You ought not to imitate those haranguers who choose always to declaim; but will never talk to their hearers. On the contrary, you should address yourself to an audience in such a modest, respectful, engaging manner, that each of them shall think you are speaking to him in particular. And this is the use and advantage of natural, familiar, insinuating tones of voice. They ought always to be grave and becoming; and even strong and pathetic, when the subject requires it. But you must not fancy that you can express the passions by the mere strength of voice; like those noisy speakers who by bawling and tossing themselves about, stun their hearers, instead of affecting them. If we would succeed in painting and raising the passions, we must know exactly what movements they inspire. For instance, observe what is the posture, and what the voice of one whose heart is pierced with sorrow, or surprised at the sight of an astonishing object; remark the natural action of the eyes; what the hands do; and what the whole body. On such occasions nature appears; and you need only follow it; if you must employ* art, conceal it so well under an exact imitation, that it may pass

* Τότε γὰρ ἡ τέχνη τέλειος, ἡνίκ' ἂν φύσις εἶναι δοκῇ· ἡ δ' αὖ φύσις ἐπιτυχὴς, ὅταν λαμβάνεσα περιέχη τὴν τέχνην.

Longinus, § xxii.

for nature itself. But to speak the truth, orators in such cases are like poets who write elegies or other passionate verses ; they must* feel the passion they describe, else they can never paint it well. The greatest art imaginable can never speak like† true passion and undisguised nature. So that you will always be but an imperfect orator, if you be not thoroughly moved with those sentiments that you paint, and would infuse into others. Nor do I say this from a pious motive : I speak now only as‡ an orator.

B. The case, I think, is abundantly plain : but you spoke to us of the eyes : have they their rhetoric too ?

A. Yes ; if you will believe§ Tully, and other ancient orators. Nothing is more intelligible than the aspect : it expresses every passion of the soul. And in the aspect, the eyes are most active and significant. One well-timed look will pierce to the bottom of the heart.

B. The preacher we were speaking of, has usually his eyes shut. When we observe him near, it is very shocking.

* Ut ridentibus arrident, ita flentibus adsunt
 Humani vultus. Si vis me flere, dolendum est
 Primum ipsi tibi——
 ——male si mandata loqueris,
 Aut dormitabo, aut ridebo. Tristitia mœstum
 Vultum verba decent ; iratum plena minarum.
 Format enim natura prius nos intus ad omnem
 Fortunarum habitum ; juvat, aut impellit ad iram,
 Aut ad humum mœrore gravi deducit, et angit ;
 Post effert animi motus interprete lingua. *Hor. de A. P.*

† Θαρρῶν γὰρ ἀφορισαμένη ἂν ὥς ἐδὲν ἔτως ὥς τὸ γενναῖον πάθος ἔνθα χεῖρ
 μεγαλήγορον, ὥσπερ ὑπὸ μανίας τινὸς, καὶ πνεύματος ἐνθουσιαστικῆς ἐκπνέον, καὶ
 οἰονεὶ φοιβάζον τὰς λόγους. *Longinus, § viii.*

‡ Neque fieri potest, ut doleat is qui audit, ut oderit. ut invidet, ut pertimescat aliquid, nisi omnes ii motus quos orator adhibere volet judici, in ipso oratore impressi, atque inusti videbuntur—ut enim nulla materies tam facilis ad exardescendum est, quæ nisi admoto igni ignem concipere possit : sic nulla mens est tam ad comprehendendam vim oratoris parata, quæ possit incendi, nisi inflammatus ipse ad eam et adens accesseris. *Cic. de Orat. lib. ii. § 45.*

§ Sed in ore sunt omnia. Inn eo autem ipso dominatus est omnis *oculorum*—animi enim est omnis actio ; et imago animi vultus est, indices oculi. Nam hæc est una pars corporis quæ quot animi motus sunt, tot significationes, et commutationes possit efficere—oculi sunt quorum tum intentione, tum remissione, tum conjectu, tum hilaritate motus animorum significemus apte cum genere ipso orationis ; est enim *actio* quasi *sermo corporis* ; quo magis menti congruens esse debet.—Quare in hac nostra actione secundum vocem vultus valet : is autem oculis gubernatur. *Cic. de Orat. lib. iii. § 59.*

A. It is disagreeable because we perceive that he wants one of the chief things that ought to enliven his discourse.

B. But why does he so?

A. He makes haste to pronounce his words; and shuts his eyes, because it helps his labouring memory.

B. I observed indeed that it was very much burdened: sometimes he repeated several words to find out the thread of his discourse. Such repetitions make one look like a careless school-boy that has forgot his lesson. They are very disagreeable; and would not be easily excused in a preacher of less note.

A. It is not so much the preacher's fault as the defect of the method he follows, after many others. So long as men preach by heart, and often, they will be apt to fall into this perplexity.

B. How do you mean? Would you have us not to preach by heart? Without doing so, one could not make an exact, pithy discourse.

A. I am not against a preacher's getting some particular sermons by heart. They may always have time enough to prepare themselves for extraordinary occasions. And they might even acquit themselves handsomely without such great preparation.

B. How? This seems incredible.

A. If I be mistaken, I shall readily own it. Let us only examine the point without prepossession. What is the chief aim of an orator? Is it not to persuade? And in order to this, ought he not to affect his hearers, by moving their passions?

B. I grant it.

A. The most lively and moving way of preaching is therefore the best.

B. True; what do you conclude from that?

A. Which of two orators will have the most powerful and affecting manner, he who learns his discourse by heart, or he who speaks without reciting word for word what he had studied?

B. He, I think, who has got his discourse by heart.

A. Have patience—and let us state the question right. On the one hand, I suppose a man prepares his discourse exactly, and learns it by heart to the least syllable. On the other hand, I suppose another person who fills his mind with the subject he is to talk of; who speaks with great ease; (for, you would not have any body* attempt

* —Ego nec studium sine divite vena,

Nec rude quid prosit video ingenium. *Hor. de A. P.*

to speak in public, without having proper talents for it :) in short, a man who has attentively considered all the principles and parts of the subject he is to handle, and has a comprehensive view of them in all their extent ; who has reduced his thoughts into a proper method, and prepared the strongest expressions to explain and enforce them in a sensible manner ; who ranges all his arguments, and has a sufficient number of affecting figures : such a man certainly knows every thing that he ought to say, and the order in which the whole should be placed ;* to succeed therefore in his delivery, he wants nothing but those common expressions that must make the bulk of his discourse. But do you believe now that such a person would have any difficulty in finding easy, familiar expressions ?

B. He could not find such just and handsome ones as he might have hit on, if he had sought them leisurely in his closet.

A. I own that. But according to you, he would lose only a few ornaments ; and you know how to rate that loss according to the principles we laid down before. On the other side, what advantage must he not have in the freedom and force of his action ; which is the main thing. Supposing that he has applied himself much to composing, (as† Cicero requires of an orator,) that he has read all the best models ; and has a natural or acquired easiness of style and speech ; that he has abundance of solid knowledge and learning ; that he understands his subject perfectly well ; and has ranged

* He then that would prepare himself to be a preacher in this method, must accustom himself to talk freely to himself, to let his thoughts flow from him ; especially when he feels an edge and heat upon his mind ; for then happy expressions will come in his mouth—he must also be writing essays upon all sorts of subjects ; for by writing he will bring himself to a correctness both in thinking and in speaking ; and thus by a hard practice for two or three years, a man may render himself such a *master* in this way, that he can never be surprised ; nor will new thoughts ever dry up upon him. He must talk over himself the whole *body* of divinity ; and accustom himself to explain and prove, to clear objections, and to apply every part of it to some *practical* use—and if in these his meditations, happy thoughts, and noble, tender expressions, do at any time offer themselves, he must not lose them, but write them down. By a very few years' practice of two or three of such soliloquies a-day, chiefly in the morning, when the head is clearest, and the spirits are liveliest, a man will contract a great easiness both in thinking and speaking.

Bishop Burnet's Discourse on the Pastoral Care, p. 210, 211.

† Caput autem est, quod (ut vere dicam) minime facimus, (est enim magni laboris, quem plerique fugimus) quam plurimum scribere—stilus optimus, et præstantissimus dicendi effector, ac magister ; neque injuria : nam si subitam et fortuitam orationem, commentatio, et cogitatio facile vincit ; hanc ipsam profecto assidua ac diligens scriptura superabit.

De Orat. lib. i. § 33.

all the parts and proofs of it in his head; in such a case we must conclude that he will speak with force, and* order, and readiness. His periods perhaps will not sooth the ear so much as the others; and for that reason he must be the better orator. His transitions may not be so fine; it is no great matter—though these he might have prepared without getting them by heart; besides, these little omissions were common to the most eloquent orators among the ancients. They thought such negligence was very natural, and ought even to be imitated, to avoid the appearance of too great preparation. What then could our orator want? He might make some little repetition; but that too must have its use. Not only will the judicious hearer take a pleasure in observing nature here, which leads one often to resume whatever view of the subject strikes strongest upon the mind; but likewise this repetition imprints the truth more deeply; which is the best manner of instruction. At the worst, one might find in his discourse some inaccuracy of construction, some obsolete word that has been censured by the academy; something that is irregular; or, if you will, some weak or misapplied expression that he may happen to drop in the warmth of action. But surely they must have narrow souls who can think such little escapes worth any one's notice. There is an abundance of these to be met with in the most† excellent originals. The greatest orators among the ancients neglected them; and if our views were as noble as theirs, we should not so much regard those‡ trifles, which can amuse none but such as are not able to discern

* ———cui lecta potenter erit res,

Nec facundia deferit hunc, nec lucidus ordo.

Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequentur.

Hor. de A. P.

† Παράτεθεινός δ' ἐκ ὀλίγα καὶ αὐτὸς ἁμαρτήματα, καὶ Ομηροῦ, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσοι μέγιστοι, καὶ ἤκιστα τοῖς πλάισμασιν ἀρχόμενος, ὅμως δὲ ἐκ ἁμαρτημάτων μᾶλλον αὐτὰ ἐκείσια καλῶν, ἢ παροράματα δι' ἀμέλειαν, εἰκὴ πε καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν ὑπὸ μεγαλοφυΐας ἀνεπιστάτως παρενηνεγμένα·

Longinus, § xxxiii.

‡ Sunt delicta tamen, quibus ignovisse velimus :

Nam neque chorda sonum reddit quem vult manus et mens ;

Poscentique gravem persæpe remittit acutum :

Nec semper feriet quodcunque minabitur arcus.

Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis

Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,

Aut humana parum cavit natura——

Hor. de A. P.

and pursue what is truly great. Excuse my freedom, Sir ; if I did not think you had a genius very different from these little cavilling critics I condemn, I should speak of them with greater caution.

B. You may always speak your mind, Sir, without any reserve on my account. Be pleased therefore to go on with your comparison.

A. Consider then, in the next place, the advantages that a preacher must have who does not get his sermon by heart. He is entirely master of himself ; he speaks in an easy, unaffected way, and not like a formal declaimer. Things flow then from their proper source. If he has a natural talent for eloquence, his language must be lively and moving ; even* the warmth that animates him, must lead him to such pertinent expressions and figures, as he could not have found out by study.

B. Why ? Surely a man may enliven his fancy, and compose very sprightly discourses in his closet.

A. I own that ; but a just elocution and gesture must still give them a greater life and spirit. Besides, what one says in the ardour of action is far more natural and affecting ; it has a negligent air, and discovers none of that art which is visible in all elaborate composures. We may add farther, that a skilful experienced orator† adapts things to the capacity of his hearers, and varies his discourse

* But the rule I have observed last, is the most necessary of all ; and without it all the rest will never do the business : it is this,—that a man must have in himself a deep sense of the truth and power of religion ; he must have a life and flame in his thoughts with relation to these subjects ; he must have felt himself those things which he intends to explain and recommend to others. He must observe narrowly the motions of his own mind, that so he may have a lively heat in himself when he speaks of them ; and that he may speak in so sensible a manner, that it may be almost *felt* that he speaks from his heart. There is an authority in the simplest things that can be said, when they carry visible characters of genuineness in them. Now if a man can carry on this method, and by much meditation and prayer, draw down divine influences, which are always to be expected when a man puts himself in the way of them, and prepares himself for them, he will always feel that *while he is musing, a fire is kindled* within him ; and then he will speak with authority, and without constraint ; his thoughts will be true, and his expressions free and easy.

Discourse of the Pastoral Cure, p. 111, 112.

† Erit igitur hæc facultas in eo quem volumus esse eloquentem, ut definire rem possit ; neque id faciat tam presse et anguste, quam in illis eruditissimis disputationibus fieri solet, sed cum explanatius, tum etiam uberius, et ad commune iudicium, *popularemque intelligentiam* accommodatius.

Cic. Orat. § 33.

according to the impression he sees it makes upon their minds. For he easily perceives whether they understand him or not ; and whether he gains their attention, and moves their hearts ; and if it be needful, he resumes the same things in a different manner, and sets them in another light ; he clothes them in more familiar images and comparisons ; or he goes back to the plainest principles, from which he gradually deduces the truths he would enforce ; or he endeavours to cure those passions, that hinder the truth from making a due impression. This is the true art of instruction and persuasion ; and without this address and presence of mind, we can only make roving and fruitless declamations. Observe now how far the orator who gets every thing by heart, falls short of the other's success. If we suppose then a man to preach who depends entirely on his memory, and dares not pronounce a word different from his lesson, his style will be very exact ; but, as Dionysius Halicarnassius observes of Isocrates, his composition must please more when it is read, than when it is pronounced. Besides, let him take what pains he will, the inflexions of his voice will be too uniform, and always a little constrained. He is not like a man that speaks to an audience ; but like a rhetorician who recites or declaims. His action must be awkward and forced ; by fixing his eyes too much, he shows how much his memory labours in his delivery ; and he is afraid to give way to an unusual emotion, lest he should lose the thread of his discourse. Now the hearer perceiving such an undisguised art, is so far from being touched and captivated, as he ought to be, that he observes the speaker's artifice with coldness and neglect.

B. But did not the ancient orators do what you condemn ?

A. I believe not.

B. What ! do you think that Demosthenes and Tully did not learn by heart those finished orations they have left us ?

A. We know very well that they composed and wrote their harangues, before they spake in public ; but we have several reasons to believe that they did not get them by heart, word for word. Even the orations of Demosthenes, as we have them, show rather the sublimity and vehemence of a great genius that was accustomed to speak powerfully of public affairs, than the accuracy and politeness of an author. As for Cicero, in several places of his harangues, we find things spoken on sudden emergencies, that he could not possibly have foreseen. And if we take his opinion of this mat-

ter;* he thinks an' orator ought to have a great memory; and he even speaks of an artificial kind of memory as an useful invention; but all he says on this point does not imply that we ought to learn every word by heart. On the contrary, he seems only to require, that we should range all the parts of a discourse exactly in our memory, and prepare the figures and chief expressions we are to use; so as to be ready to add off-hand whatever may occasionally be suggested from a view of the audience, or unexpected accidents. And it is for this reason, that he requires so much application and presence of mind in an orator.

B. You must allow me to tell you, Sir, that all this does not convince me; for I cannot believe that one can speak so very well, without having prepared and adjusted all his expressions.

C. The reason why it is so hard to persuade you in this case, is, because you judge of the matter by common experience. If they who get their sermons by heart, were to preach without that preparation, it is likely they would succeed but very ill, nor am I surprised at it; for, they are not accustomed to follow nature; they have studied only to compose their sermons, and that too with affectation. They have never once thought off speaking in a noble,

* Sed verborum memoria, quae minus est nobis necessaria, majore imaginum varietate distinguitur; multa enim sunt verba. Quae quasi articuli connectunt membra orationis, quae formari similitudine nulla possunt; eorum fingendae nobis sunt imagines, quibus semper utamur. Rerum memoria, propria est oratoris; eam singulis personis bene positae notare possumus, ut sententias imaginibus, ordinem locis comprehendamus. *De Orat.* lib. ii. § 88.

† This leads me to consider the difference that is between the reading, and the speaking of sermons. Reading is peculiar to this nation, and is endured in no other. It has indeed made our sermons more exact; and so has produced to us many volumes of the best that are extant. But after all, though some few read so happily, pronounce so truly, and enter so entirely into those affections which they recommend, that in them, we see both the correctness of reading, and the seriousness of speaking sermons; yet every one is not so happy. Some by hanging their head perpetually over their notes, by blundering as they read, and by a cursory running over them, do so lessen the matter of their sermons, that as they are generally read with very little life or affection, so they are heard with as little regard or esteem. Those who read, ought certainly to be at a little more pains, than (for the most part) they are, to read true, to pronounce with an emphasis, to raise their head, and to direct their eyes to their hearers; and if they practised more alone, the just way of reading, they might deliver their sermons with much more advantage. Man is a low sort of creature: he does not (nay the greater part cannot,) consider things in themselves, without those little seasonings that must recommend them to their affections—besides, the people (who are too apt to censure the clergy) are easily carried into an obvious reflection on reading that it is an effect of laziness.

Discourse of the Pastoral Care, ch. ix.

strong, and natural manner. Indeed the greatest part of preachers have not a sufficient fund of solid knowledge to depend on, and are therefore afraid to trust themselves without the usual preparation. The method of getting sermons by heart, qualifies many, who have but very scanty and superficial parts, to make a tolerable figure in the pulpit, seeing they need only lay together a certain number of passages and remarks; and however little genius or assistance a man has, he may with time and application be able to work up and polish his matter into some form. But to preach with judgment and strength requires an attentive meditation upon the first principles of religion, an exact knowledge of morality, an insight into antiquity, strength of reasoning, and suitable action. Is not this, Sir, what you require in an orator who does not learn his discourse by heart?

A. You have explained my thoughts exactly. Only it may not be improper to add, that though a man should not possess all these qualities in a remarkable degree, he may yet preach very well, if he has a solid judgment, a tolerable stock of knowledge, and an easy way of speaking. For, in this method, as the other, there may be different degrees of eloquence. You may further observe, that most of those who preach without getting their sermons by heart, do not prepare themselves enough. They ought to study their subject with the closest attention; prepare all those moving passages that should affect the audience; and give the several parts of their discourse such an order as will best serve to set the whole in the most proper light.

B. You have oftentimes spoken of this order: do you mean any thing else by it than a division of the subject? Perhaps you have some peculiar notion on this point too.

A. You think that you rally me: but in good earnest, I am as singular in my opinion upon this head, as on any other.

B. I easily believe you.

A. It is certainly so: and since we have fallen upon this subject, I will show you how far I think the greater part of orators are defective in the point of order.

B. Since you are so fond of order, I hope you do not dislike divisions.

A. I am far from approving them.

B. Why? Do they not methodise a discourse?

A. For the most part, divisions give only a seeming order; while they really mangle and clog a discourse, by separating it into

two or three parts, which must interrupt the orator's action, and the effect it ought to produce. There remains no true* unity after such divisions; seeing they make two or three different discourses, which are joined into one, only by an arbitrary connection. For three sermons preached at different times, (if they be formed upon some regular concerted plan, as the sermons in Advent usually are,) make one piece, or entire discourse, as much, as the three points of any of these sermons make one whole by being joined and delivered together.

B. What is it then that you mean by order? How confused must a discourse be that is not divided.

A. Do you think there is more confusion in the orations of Demosthenes and Tully, than in the sermons of your parish preacher?

B. I do not know—I believe not.

A. You need not be afraid of giving your judgment too freely. The harangues of these great men are not divided as our sermons are. Nay, Isocrates (of whom we spake so much before,) and other ancient orators, did not follow our method of dividing. The fathers of the church knew nothing of it. Even S. Bernard, the last of them, only gives a hint of some divisions, and does not pursue them; nor divide his discourses in form. And for a long time after him, sermons were not divided: it is a modern invention which we owe originally to the scholastic divines.

B. I grant that the schoolmen are a very bad model for eloquence: but what form did the ancients use to give their discourses?

A. They did not divide them; but they pointed out carefully all those things that ought to be distinguished; to each of them† they assigned its proper place, after having attentively considered where it might be introduced to the best advantage, and be fittest to make a due impression. Ofttimes that which would seem noth-

* A text being opened, then the point upon which the sermon is to run is to be opened; and it will be the better heard and understood, if there be but one point in a sermon; so that one head, and only one, is well stated, and fully set out.

Discourse of the Pastoral Care, p. 249.

† Ordinis hæc virtus erit, et venus, aut ego fallor,
Ut jam nunc dicat, jam nunc debentia dici
Pleraque differat, et præsens in tempus omittat—
Infelix operis summa, quia ponere totum
Nesciet—

Hor. de A. P.

ing to the purpose, by being unseasonably urged, has a very great weight when it is reserved for its proper place ; till the audience be prepared by other things to feel all its force and consequence. Nay, a single word, when happily applied, will set the truth in the strongest light. Cicero tells us that we ought sometimes to delay giving a full view of the truth, till the very conclusion. But then, throughout our discourse, there ought to run such a concatenation of proofs, as that the first may make way for the second, and the next always serve to support the former. We ought at first to give a general view of our subject, and endeavour to gain the favour of the audience by a* modest introduction, a respectful address, and the genuine marks of candour and probity. Then we should establish those principles on which we design to argue ; and in a clear, easy, sensible manner, propose the principal facts we are to build on ; insisting chiefly on those circumstances, of which we intend to make use afterwards. From these principles and facts we must draw just consequences, and argue in such a clear and well-connected manner, that all our proofs may support each other ; and so be the more remembered. Every step we advance, our discourse ought to grow stronger, so that the hearers may gradually perceive the force and evidence of the truth ; and then we ought to display it in such lively images and movements as are proper to excite the passions. In order to this we must know their various springs, and the mutual dependence they have one upon another, which of them we can most easily move and employ to raise the rest ; and which of them, in fine, is able to produce the greatest effects, and must therefore be applied to, in the conclusion of our discourse. It is oftentimes proper, at the close, to make a short recapitulation, in which the orator ought to exert all his force and skill in giving the audience a full, clear, concise view of the chief topics he has enlarged on. In short, one is not obliged always to follow this method without any variation. There are exceptions and allowances to be made for different subjects and occasions. And even in this order I have proposed, one may find an endless variety. But now you may easily see that this method (which is

* Sed hæc adjuvant in oratore, lenitas vocis, vultus, pudoris significatio, verborum comitas : si quid persequere acrius, ut invitus, et coactus facere videare. Facilitatis, liberalitatis, mansuetudinis, pietatis, grati animi, non appetentis non avidi signa proferri perutile est—tantum autem efficitur sensu quodam ac ratione dicendi, ut quasi mores oratoris effingat oratio. *Cicero De Orat.*

chiefly taken from Tully,) cannot be observed in a discourse that is divided into three parts, nor can it be followed in each particular division. We ought therefore to choose some method, Sir, but such a method as is not discovered and promised in the beginning of our discourse. Cicero tells us that the best method is generally to conceal the order we follow, till we lead the hearer to it without his being aware of it before. I remember, he says, in express terms, that we ought to conceal even the number of our arguments; so that one shall not be able to count them, though they be very distinct in themselves, and that we ought not plainly to point out the division of a discourse. But such is the undistinguishing taste of these latter ages, that an audience cannot perceive any order, unless the speaker distinctly explain it in the beginning; and even intimate to them his gradual advances from the first to the second, and following general heads or subdivisions of his discourse.

C. But do not divisions help to support the attention, and ease the memory of the hearers? It is for their better instruction that the speaker divides his discourse.

A. A division chiefly relieves the speaker's memory. And even this effect might be much better obtained by his following a natural order without any express division: for the true connexion of things best directs the mind. Our common divisions are of use to those only who have studied, and been trained up to this method in the schools. And if the common people retain the division better than the rest of the sermon, it is only because they hear it often repeated; but, generally speaking, they best remember practical points, and such things as strike their senses and imagination.

B. The order you propose may be proper enough for some subjects; but it cannot be fit for all: for we have not always facts to lay down.

A. When we have none, we must do without them; but there are very few subjects into which they might not be aptly introduced. One of Plato's chief beauties is, that in the beginning of his moral pieces he usually gives us some fragment of history, or some tradition that serves as the foundation of his discourse. This method would far more become those who preach religion, which is entirely founded upon tradition, history, and the most ancient records. Indeed, most preachers argue but weakly; and do not instruct people sufficiently, because they do not trace back things to these sources.

B. We have already given you too much trouble, Sir, and I am almost ashamed to detain you longer ; but I wish heartily you would allow me to ask you a few more questions concerning the rules of public discourse.

A. With all my heart : I am not yet weary. You may dispose, as you please, of the little time I have left.

B. Well, then, you would have all false and trifling ornaments entirely banished from discourse. Now, though you touched upon this point before, pray show me by some sensible examples how to* distinguish such false beauties from those that are solid and natural.

A. Do you love quavering notes in music ? Are you not better pleased with those brisk, significant notes, that describe things, and express the passions ?

B. Yes, certainly ; for quavers are of no use : they only amuse the ear, and do not affect the mind. Our music was once full of them ; and was therefore very weak and confused : but now we begin to refine our taste, and to come nearer the music of the ancients, which is a kind of passionate declamation that acts powerfully upon the soul.

A. I knew that music, of which you are so good a judge, would serve to make you understand what concerns eloquence. There ought to be a kind of eloquence in music itself ; and in both these arts we ought to reject all false and trifling beauties. Do you not perceive now that by a trilling discourse I mean the humming jingle of languid, uniform periods ; a chiming of words that returns perpetually, like the burden of a song ? This is the false eloquence that resembles bad music.

B. I wish, Sir, you could make it a little plainer still.

A. The reading of good and bad orators will more effectually form your taste, on this point, than all the rules in the world. However, it were easy to satisfy you by some pertinent examples. I

* False eloquence, like the prismatic glass
 Its gaudy colours spreads on every place ;
 The face of nature we no more survey,
 All glares alike without distinction gay.
 But true expression, like the unchanging sun,
 Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon.
 It gilds all objects, but it alters none.
 Expression is the dress of thought, and still
 Appears more decent, as more suitable.—*Essay on Criticism.*

will not mention any modern ones, though we abound in false ornaments. That I may not offend any person, let us return to Isocrates, who is the standard of those nice and florid harangues that are now in vogue. Did you ever read his famous panegyric on Helen ?

B. Yes : I have read it some time ago.

A. How did you like it ?

B. Extremely well. I thought I never saw so much wit, elegance, sweetness, invention, and delicacy, in any composure. I own to you that Homer himself (whom I read afterwards,) did not seem to have so much spirit as he. But now that you have shown me what ought to be the true aim of poets and orators, I see plainly that Homer, who concealed his art, vastly surpasses Isocrates who took so much pains to display his skill. But I was once charmed with that orator, and should have been so still, if you had not undeceived me. Mr. — is the Isocrates of our days ; and I perceive that by showing the defects of that ancient orator, you condemn all those who imitate his florid, effeminate rhetoric.

A. I am now speaking of Isocrates only—in the beginning of his encomium he magnifies the love that Theseus had for Helen, and fancied that he should give a lofty idea of her, by describing the heroic qualities of that great man who fell in love with her : as if Theseus (whom the ancients always represent as weak and inconstant in his amours,) could not have been smitten with a woman of a moderate beauty. Then he comes to the judgment that Paris formed of her. He says that a dispute having arisen among the goddesses concerning their beauty, they agreed to make Paris judge of it ; upon which occasion Juno proffered him the empire of Asia, Minerva assured him of constant victory in battles, and Venus tempted him with the beautiful Helen. Now seeing Paris, when he was to determine this matter could not behold the faces of those goddesses, because of their dazzling splendour, he could only judge of the worth of the three things that they offered ; and upon the comparison he preferred Helen to empire and to victory. Then the orator praises the judgment of Paris, in whose determination the goddesses themselves acquiesced, and adds these remarkable words : * ‘ I wonder that any one should think Paris indiscreet in

* Θαυμάζω δ' εἰ τις οἶεται κακῶς βέβηλεῦσθαι τὸν μὲν αὐτῆς ζῆν ἐλόμενον, ἥς ἕνεκα πολλοὶ τῶν ἡμιθέων ἀποθνήσκειν ἠθέλησαν. *Isocr. Hel. Land.*

choosing to live with her, for whom many demi-gods would have been willing to die.'

C. This puts me in mind of our preachers who are so full of antitheses and turns of wit. There are a great many such orators as Isocrates.

A. He is their master; all the rest of his panegyric is of the* same strain. It is founded on the long war of Troy; the calamities that the Greeks suffered for the rape of Helen, and the praise of beauty which has so much power over men. There is nothing in the whole discourse solidly proved, nor the least point of moral instruction. He judges of the worth of things only according to men's extravagant passions. And as his proofs are weak, so his style is flourished and finical. I quoted this passage, profane as it is, because it is a very famous one; and because this affected manner is very much in fashion. The more grave discourses of Isocrates are composed in the same spruce, effeminate way; and are full of such false beauties as that I now mentioned.

C. I find you like none of those witty turns which have nothing in them that is either solid, natural or affecting; and tend neither to convince, nor paint, nor persuade. The example you have brought from Isocrates, though it be upon a trifling subject, is yet very pertinent; for, all such tinsel-wit must appear still more ridiculous when it is applied to grave and serious matters.

A. But, Sir, as to Isocrates, do not you think I had reason to censure him as freely as Tully assures us Aristotle did?

B. What says Tully?

A. That Aristotle† perceiving Isocrates had perverted eloquence from its proper use to amusement and ostentation; and thereby drawn to himself the most considerable disciples, he applied to him a verse of Philoctetes, to show how much he was ashamed of being silent while that vain declaimer carried all before him. But I have done now: it is time for me to be going.

B. We cannot part with you so soon, Sir: will you then allow of no antitheses?

* His very next words are these,—Πῶς δ' ἔκ ἂν εἴη ἀνόητος εἰ τὰς θεὰς εἰδῶς περὶ κάλλους φιλονεικῶσας, αὐτὸς κάλλους κατεφρόνησε, καὶ μὴ ταύτην ἐνόμισε μεγίστην εἶναι τῶν δωρῶν, περὶ ἧς ἀκείνας ἑώρα μάλιστα σπευδαζέσας;—

Ibid.

† Lib. 3. §. 35.

A. Yes : when the things we speak of are naturally opposite one to another, it may be proper enough to show their opposition. Such antitheses are just, and have a solid beauty ; and a right application of them is often the most easy and concise manner of explaining things. But it is extremely childish to use artificial turns and windings to make words clash and play one against another. At first, this may happen to dazzle those who have no taste ; but they soon grow weary of such a silly affectation. Did you ever observe the Gothic architecture of our old churches ?

B. Yes ; it is very common.

A. Did you take notice of the roses, holes, unconnected ornaments, and disjointed little knacks, that these Gothic buildings are full of. These odd conceits are just such beauties in architecture as forced antitheses and quibbles are in eloquence. The Grecian architecture is far more simple, and admits of none but natural, solid, and majestic ornaments : we see nothing in it but what is great, proportioned, and well placed. But the Gothic kind was invented by the Arabians ; who, being a people of a quick, sprightly fancy, and having no rule, nor culture, could scarce avoid falling into these whimsical niceties. And this vivacity corrupted their taste in all other things. For they used sophisms in their logic, they loved little knacks in architecture, and invented witticisms in poetry and eloquence. All these are of the same kind.

B. This is curious indeed. You think then that a sermon, full of forced antitheses, and such kind of ornaments, is like a church built in the Gothic way.

A. Yes : I think the comparison is just.

B. Let me ask you but one question more ; and then you shall go.

A. What is it ?

B. It seems very difficult to give a particular account of facts, in a noble style ; and yet we ought to do so if we talk solidly as you require. Pray, what is the proper style for expatiating in such cases ?

A. We are so much afraid of a low strain, that our expressions are usually dry, lifeless, and indeterminate. They who praise a saint pitch on the most magnificent phrases ; they tell us he was an admirable person—that his virtues were celestial—that he was rather an angel, than a man. And thus the whole encomium is a mere declamation without any proof ; and without drawing a just character. On the contrary, the ancient Greeks made little use of

these general terms which prove nothing ; but they insisted much on facts, and the particulars of a character. For instance, Xenophon does not once say in all his *Cyropædia*, that Cyrus was an admirable man ; but throughout the work he makes us really admire him. Thus is it that we ought to praise holy persons, by entering into the particular detail of their sentiments and actions. But there prevails an affected politeness among the pedantic and conceited part of all ranks and professions, who value themselves upon their wit or learning. They never venture to use any expression but what they reckon fine and uncommon. They talk always in a* high strain ; and would think it beneath them to call things by their proper names. Now in true eloquence almost every thing may be introduced. The perfection of poetry itself, (which is the loftiest kind of composure) depends on a full and lively description of things in all their circumstances. When Virgil represents the Trojan fleet leaving the African shore, or arriving on the coast of Italy, you see every proper circumstance exactly described. But we must own that the Greeks entered still further into the particular detail of things ; and followed nature more closely in representing the smallest circumstances. For which reason, many people would be apt, if they dared, to reckon Homer too plain and simple in his narrations. In this ancient, beautiful simplicity, (which few are able to relish,) this poet very much resembles the holy scripture ; but in many places the sacred writing surpass his, as much as he excels all the other ancients, in a natural and lively representation of things.

B. In relating facts, then, ought we to describe every individual circumstance that belongs to them ?

A. No ; we should represent nothing to the hearers but what deserves their attention, and helps to give a clear and just idea of the things we describe ; so that it requires great judgment to make a right† choice of circumstances. But we must not be afraid of mentioning such as can be any way serviceable ; for it is a false politeness that leads us to suppress some useful things, because we do not think them capable of any ornament. Besides, Homer

* *Prima est eloquentiæ virtus perspicuitas ; et quo quisque ingenio minus valet, hoc se magis attollere, et dilatare conatur : ut statura breves indigitos eriguntur ; et plura infirmi minantur. Nam tumidos, et corruptos, et tinulos, et quocumque alio cacozeliæ genere peccantes, certum habeo, non virium, sed infirmitatis vitio laborare : ut corpora non robore, sed valetudine, inflantur.*

Quint. lib. ii. c. 3.

† See Longinus, § x.

has shown us by his example, that we might give a* proper grace and embellishment to every subject.

B. Seeing you condemn the florid, swelling style, what kind do you reckon fittest for public use ?

A. There ought to be a variety of style in every discourse. We should rise in our expression when we speak of lofty subjects ; and be† familiar, in common ones, without being coarse, or groveling. In most cases, an easy simplicity and exactness are sufficient, though some things require vehemence and sublimity. If a painter should draw nothing but magnificent palaces, he could not follow truth, but must paint his own fancies ; and by that means soon cloy us. He ought to copy nature in its agreeable varieties : and after drawing a stately city, it might be proper to represent a desert, and the huts of shepherds. Most of those who aim at making fine harangues injudiciously labour to clothe all their thoughts in a† pompous, gaudy dress ; and they fancy that they have succeeded happily, when they express some general remarks in a florid, lofty style. Their only care is to fill their discourse with abundance of ornaments, to please the vitiated taste of their audience ; like ig-

* First follow nature, and your judgment frame

By her just standard, which is still the same :

Unerring nature, still divinely bright,

One clear, unchang'd, and universal light ;

Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,

At once the source, and end, and test of art.

Art from that fund each just supply provides,

Works without show ; and without pomp presides.

Those rules of old discover'd, not devis'd,

Are nature still, but nature methodis'd :

Nature like monarchy, is but restrain'd

By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

Essay on Criticism.

† Εἰν ἄρ' ὁ ἰδιωτισμὸς ἐνίοτε τῷ κόσμῳ παραπολὺ ἐμφανισικώτερον ἐπίγινώσκειται γὰρ αὐτάδεν ἐκ τῷ κοινῷ βίβ. τὸ δὲ σύνηδες ἤδη πιστότερο — ταῦτά γὰρ ἐγγὺς παραξίζει τὴν ιδιότην, ἀλλ' ἐκ ἰδιωτεύει τῷ σημαντικῷ.

Longinus, § xxxi.

† Namque illud genus ostentationi compositum, solum petit audientiam voluptatem : ideoque omnes dicendi artes aperit, ornatumque orationis exponit—mala affectatio, per omne dicendi genus peccat. Nam et tumida, et exilia, et prædulcia, et abundantia, et arcessita, et exultantia sub idem nomen cadunt. Denique κακόζηλον vocatur, quicquid est ultra virtutem ; quoties ingenium judicio caret, et specie boni fallitur ; omnium in eloquentia vitiorum pessimum : nam cætera cum vitentur, hoc petitur.

Quint. lib. viii. c. 3.

norant cooks who know not how to season dishes, in a proper, natural way; but fancy they must give them an exquisite relish by mixing excessive quantities of the most seasoning things. But the style of a true orator has nothing in it that is swelling or ostentatious; he always adapts it to the subjects he treats of, and the persons he instructs, and manages it so judiciously that he never aims at being sublime and lofty, but when he ought to be so.

B. What you said concerning the language of scripture makes me wish earnestly that you would show us the beauty of it. May we not see you some time to-morrow?

A. I shall hardly have time to-morrow: but I will endeavour to wait on you this evening. And since you seem so desirous of it, we will talk of the word of God: for hitherto we have only spoken of the language of men.

C. Farewell, Sir; I beg of you to be punctual: otherwise we must come and find you out.

THE THIRD DIALOGUE.

C. I BEGAN to fear, Sir, that you would not come, and was very near going to see for you at Mr. ———.

A. I was detained by a perplexing affair I had upon my hands: but I have got rid of it to my satisfaction.

B. I am very glad of it: for we wanted you extremely to finish the subject we were talking of in the morning.

C. Since I parted with you, Sir, I heard a sermon at ———, and I thought of you. The preacher spoke in a very edifying manner: but I question whether the common people understood him or not.

A. It happens but too often (as I heard an ingenious lady observe,) that our preachers speak Latin in English. The most essential quality of a good preacher is to be instructive: but he must have great abilities and experience to make him so. On the one hand he must be perfectly acquainted with the force of scripture expressions: on the other, he must understand the capacity of those to whom he preaches, and adapt himself to it.

Now this requires a solid knowledge, and great discernment. Preachers speak every day to people, of the scripture, the church,

the Mosaic law, the gospel, of sacrifices, of Moses and Aaron, and Melchisdec, of the prophets and apostles ; but there is not sufficient care taken to instruct the people in the true meaning of these things and in the characters of those holy persons. One might follow some preachers twenty years, without getting sufficient knowledge of religion.

B. Do you think that people are really ignorant of those things you mentioned ?

C. For my part, I believe they are : and that few or none understand them enough to receive any benefit from sermons.

B. That may be true of the lowest rank of people.

C. Well ; ought not they to be instructed as well as others ? Do not they make up the bulk of mankind ?

A. The truth is, persons of rank and fashion have but little more knowledge of religion than the common people. There are always three fourth parts of an ordinary audience, who do not know those first principles of religion, in which the preacher supposes every one to be fully instructed.

B. Would you then have him explain the catechism in his sermons to a polite congregation ?

A. I grant there is a due regard to be had to an audience, and discretion to be used in adapting a discourse to their capacity. But still without giving the least offence, a preacher might remind the most discerning hearers of those passages of sacred history, which explain the origin and institution of holy things. This way of having recourse to the first foundations of religion, would be so far from seeming low, that it would give most discourses that force and beauty which they generally want. This is particularly true with regard to the mysteries of religion ; for the hearers can never be instructed, nor persuaded, if you do not trace things back to their source. For example, how can you make them understand what the church says, after* St. Paul, that Jesus Christ is our Passover, if you do not explain to them the Jewish Passover, which was appointed to be a perpetual memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, and to typify a more important redemption that was reserved for the Messiah. It is for this reason, I said that almost every thing in religion is historical. And if preachers would have a full knowledge of this truth, they must be very conversant in the scripture.

B. You must excuse my interrupting you on this subject ; Sir, you told us in the morning that the scriptures are eloquent, and I

was glad to hear you say so. Let me entreat you to show us how we may discern the beauties of scripture, and in what its eloquence consists. The Latin Bible seems to me most vulgar and inaccurate. I see no delicacy in it. What is it then that you so much admire?

A. The Latin is only a literal version, in which, out of respect to the original, there are many Greek and Hebrew phrases retained. Do you despise Homer because he has been sorrily translated into French?

B. But the Greek itself (which is the original language of the New Testament) appears to me very coarse and unpolite.

A. The apostles were not acquainted with the genuine Greek, but used that corrupted kind which prevailed among the Hellenistical Jews. For this reason St. Paul says* 'I am rude in speech,' but not in knowledge. It is very obvious that the apostle here only meant he was not a master of the Greek tongue, though he solidly explained the doctrine of the holy scripture.

C. Had not the apostles the gift of speaking unknown tongues?

A. Undoubtedly: and they even conveyed that gift to great numbers of their illiterate converts. But as for the languages that the apostles had learnt in a natural way, we have reason to believe that the Spirit of God permitted them to speak as they did before. St. Paul, who was a citizen of Tarsus, in Cilicia, naturally spake the corrupted Greek used among the Jews there: and we find that this is the language he wrote in. St. Luke seems to have understood Greek a little better.

C. But I always thought that in the passage you mentioned, St. Paul gave up all pretences to oratory, and regarded nothing but the simplicity of the evangelical doctrine. Nay, I have heard several persons of worth and good judgment affirm that the holy scripture is not eloquent. St. Jerom was punished for being disgusted at the simplicity of scripture, and liking Tully better. St. Austin (in his confessions) seems to have fallen into the same fault. Did not God intend to try our faith by the obscurity, and even by the lowness of the scripture style, as well as by the poverty of our Redeemer?

A. You seem, Sir, to carry this point too far. Whether do you choose to believe St. Jerom when he was punished for having followed his youthful studies too closely in his retreat; or when he

had made the greatest progress both in sacred and profane learning ; and, in an epistle to Paulinus, invited him to study the scripture—assuring him that he would find more charms in the prophets than he had discovered in the heathen poets ? Or, was St. Austin's judgment better in his youth, when the seeming meanness of the sacred style disgusted him, than when he composed his books Of the Christian Doctrine ? There he often says that St. Paul was powerfully persuasive ; and that the torrent of his eloquence must be perceived by the most unattentive reader. He adds, that in the apostle, wisdom did not seek after the beauty of language ; but that the beauties of language offered themselves, and attended his wisdom. He quotes many lofty passages of his epistles, wherein he shows all the art and address of the heathen orators far outdone. St. Austin excepts only two things in this comparison : he says, that these orators studied the ornaments of eloquence ; but that the beauties of oratory naturally followed St. Paul, and others of the sacred writers. And then he owns that he did not sufficiently understand the delicacies of the Greek tongue, to be a competent judge, whether there be the same numbers and cadence of periods in the sacred text, that we meet with in profane authors. I forgot to tell you that he quotes that passage of the prophet Amos which begins thus,* ‘ wo to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria——:’ and assures us that in this place the prophet has surpassed every thing that is sublime in the heathen orators.

C. But how do you understand these words of St. Paul ;† ‘ my speech and my preaching was not with the enticing (persuasive) words of man's wisdom---- ?’ Does he not tell the Corinthians that he came not to preach Christ to them, with the sublimity of discourse and of wisdom : that he ‘ knew nothing among them but Jesus, and him crucified :’ that his preaching was founded not upon the persuasive language of human wisdom and learning, but upon the sensible effects of the Spirit and the power of God ; to the end (as he adds) ‘ that their faith should not depend upon the wisdom of men, but on the power of God ?’ What is the meaning of these words, Sir ? What stronger expression could the apostle use to condemn this art of persuasion that you would establish ? For my part, I freely own that at first I was glad when you censured all those affected ornaments of discourse that vain declaimers are so fond of ; but the sequel of your scheme does not answer the pi-

* Ch. vi.

† 1 Cor. xi. 4.

ous beginning of it. I find that you would still make preaching a human art, and banish apostolical simplicity from the pulpit.

A. Though you judge very unfavourably of my esteem for eloquence, I am not dissatisfied at the zeal with which you censure it. However, Sir, let us endeavour to understand one another aright. There are several worthy persons who judge, with you, that eloquent preaching is repugnant to the simplicity of the gospel. But when we have mutually explained our sentiments, perhaps they may be found to agree. What then do you mean by simplicity? And what do you call eloquence?

C. By simplicity, I mean a discourse without any artifice or magnificence. By eloquence, I mean a discourse full of art and ornaments.

A. When you require an artless, simple discourse, would you have it without order and connexion, without solid and convincing proofs, and without a proper method for instructing the ignorant? Would you have a preacher say nothing that is pathetic; and never endeavour to affect the heart?

C. Far from it: I would have a discourse that both instructs and moves people.

A. That would make it eloquent: for we have seen before that eloquence is the art of instructing and persuading men, by moving their passions.

C. I grant that preachers ought to convince and affect their hearers; but I would have them to do it without art, by an apostolical simplicity.

A. The more artless and natural such a convincing, persuasive eloquence is, it must be the more powerful. But let us inquire whether the art of persuasion be inconsistent with the simplicity of the gospel. What mean you by art?

C. I mean a system of rules that men have invented, and usually observe in their discourses, to make them more beautiful, elegant and pleasing.

A. If by art you only mean this invention to render a discourse more handsome and polished in order to please people, I will not dispute with you about words, but will readily acknowledge that this art ought not to be admitted into sermons: for, (as we agreed before) this vanity is unworthy of eloquence, and far more unbecoming the sacred function. This is the very point about which I reasoned so much with Mr. B. But if by art and eloquence, you

mean what the most judicious writers among the ancients understood, we must then set a just value upon eloquence.

C. What did they understand by it ?

A. According to them the art of eloquence comprehends those means that wise reflection and experience have discovered to render a discourse proper to persuade men of the truth, and to engage them to love and obey it. And this is what you think every preacher should be able to do. For did you not say that you approved of order, and a right manner of instruction, solidity of reasoning, and pathetic movements ; I mean such as can touch and affect people's hearts ? Now this is what I call eloquence : you may give it what name you please.

C. Now I comprehend your notion of eloquence : and I cannot but acknowledge that such a manly, grave, serious manner of persuasion, would much become the pulpit ; and that it seems even necessary to instruct people with success. But how do you understand those words of St. Paul that I quoted before ? Do they not expressly condemn eloquence ?

A. In order to explain the apostle's words, let me ask you a few questions.

C. As many as you please, Sir.

A. Is it not true that the apostle argues with wonderful strength in his epistles ? Does he not reason finely against the heathen philosophers and the Jews, in his epistle to the Romans ? Is there not great force, in what he says concerning the inability of the Mosaic law to justify men ?

C. Certainly.

A. Is there not a chain of solid reasoning in his epistle to the Hebrews, about the insufficiency of the ancient sacrifices ; the rest that David promised to the children of God, besides that which the Israelites enjoyed in Palestine after Joshua's days ; concerning the order of Aaron, and that of Melchisedec, and the spiritual and eternal covenant that behooved to succeed the carnal and earthly one which was established by the mediation of Moses, for a time only ? Are not the apostle's arguments on these several subjects very strong and conclusive ?

C. I think they are.

A. When St. Paul therefore disclaimed the use of 'the persuasive words of man's wisdom,' he did not mean to condemn true wisdom, and the force of reasoning.

C. That appears plainly from his own example.

A. Why then do you think that he meant to condemn solid eloquence, any more than true wisdom ?

C. Because he expressly rejects eloquence in that passage which I desired you to explain.

A. But doth he not likewise disclaim wisdom ? The place seems to be more express against wisdom, and human reasoning, than against eloquence. And yet he himself reasoned frequently, and was very eloquent. You grant that he argued well ; and St. Austin assures you that the apostle was an orator.

C. You plainly point out the difficulty, but you do not answer it. Pray, show us how it is to be solved.

A. St. Paul reasoned much ; he persuaded effectually ; so that he was really an excellent philosopher and an orator. But as he tells us in the place you quoted—his preaching was not founded on human reasoning, nor on the art of persuasion. It was a ministry of divine institution, that owed its efficacy to God alone. The conversion of the whole world was, according to the ancient prophecies, to be the great and standing miracle of the Christian religion. This was the kingdom of God that came from heaven, and was to convert and reduce all the nations of the earth to the worship and service of the true God. Jesus Christ crucified, by his being declared to them, was to draw them all to himself merely by the power of his cross. The philosophers had reasoned and disputed, without converting either themselves or others. The Jews had been intrusted with a law that showed them their miseries, but could not relieve them. All mankind were convinced of the general disorder and corruption that reigned among them. Jesus Christ came with his cross ; that is, he came poor, humble, and suffering for us. To silence our vain, presumptuous reason, he did not argue like the philosophers, but he determined with authority. By his miracles, and his grace, he showed that he was above all. That he might confound the false wisdom of men, he sets before them the seeming folly and scandal of his cross ; that is, the example of his profound humiliation. That which mankind reckoned* folly, and at which they were most offended, was the very thing that should convert and lead them to God. They wanted to be cured of their pride, and their excessive love of sensible objects ; and to affect them the more, God showed them his Son crucified. The apostles preached

* 1 Cor. i. 23, 25.

him, and walked in his steps. They had not recourse to any human means, neither to philosophy, nor rhetoric, nor policy, nor wealth, nor authority. God would have the sole glory of his work : and the success of it to depend entirely on himself ; he therefore chose what is weak, and rejected what is strong, to display his power in the most sensible manner. He brought all out of nothing in the conversion of the world, as well as at the creation of it. That work therefore had this divine character stamped upon it, that it was not founded upon any thing that the world admired or valued. It would only have weakened and frustrated the wonderful power of the cross (as* St. Paul says) to ground the preaching of the gospel upon natural means. It was necessary that without human help, the gospel should of itself open people's hearts ; and by that prodigious efficacy show mankind that it came from God. Thus was human wisdom confounded and rejected. Now what must we conclude from hence ? This only ; that the conversion of the nations, and the establishment of the Christian Church, was not owing to the learned reasonings, and persuasive words of man's wisdom. It does not imply that there was no eloquence nor wisdom in several of those who first preached the gospel ; but only, that they did not depend on this eloquent wisdom ; nor did they study it as a thing that was to give an efficacy to their doctrine. It was founded (as the apostle tells us†) not upon the persuasive discourses of human philosophy ; but solely upon the effects of the Spirit and the power of God ; that is, upon the miracles that struck the eyes and minds of men, and upon the inward operation of the divine grace.

C. According to your reasoning, then, they make void the efficacy of our Saviour's cross, who ground their preaching upon human wisdom and eloquence.

A. Undoubtedly. The ministry of the word is entirely built upon faith ; and the preachers of it ought to pray and purify their hearts, and expect all their success from heaven. They should arm themselves with ' the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God ;' and not depend on their own abilities. This is the necessary preparation for preaching the gospel. But though the inward fruit and success of it must be ascribed to grace alone, and the efficacy of God's word, there are yet some things that man is to do on his part.

* 1 Cor. i. 17.

† Οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις——

1 Cor. ii. 4.

C. Hitherto you have talked very solidly : but I see plainly you are now returning to your first opinion.

A. I did not change it. Do not you believe that the work of our salvation depends upon God's grace ?

C. Yes : it is an article of faith.

A. You own, however, that we ought to use great prudence in choosing a right station and conduct in life, and in avoiding dangerous temptations. Now do we make void the grace of God, and its efficacy, by watching and prayer, and a prudent circumspection ? Certainly not. We owe all to God, and yet he obliges us to comply with an external order of human means. The apostles did not study the vain pomp and trifling ornaments of the heathen orators. They did not fall into the subtile reasonings of the philosophers, who made all to depend upon those airy speculations in which they lost themselves. The apostles only preached Jesus Christ with all the force and magnificent simplicity of the scripture language. It is true they had no need of any preparation for their ministry ; because the Spirit, who descended upon them in a sensible manner, supplied them with words in preaching the gospel. The difference then betwixt the apostles and their successors in the ministry, is, that these, not being miraculously inspired like the apostles, have need to prepare themselves, and to fill their minds with the doctrine and spirit of the scripture, to form their discourses. But this preparation should never lead them to preach in a more artless manner than the apostles. Would you not be satisfied if preachers used no more ornaments in their sermons than St. Peter, St. Paul, St. James, St. Jude, and St. John did ?

C. I think I ought to require no more. And I must confess that since (as you say) eloquence consists chiefly in the order, force, and propriety of the words by which men are persuaded and moved, it does not give me so much offence as it did. I always reckoned eloquence to be an art that is inconsistent with the simplicity of the gospel.

A. There are two sorts of people that have this notion of it ; the false orators, who are widely mistaken in seeking after eloquence amidst a vain pomp of words ; and some pious persons who have no great depth of knowledge ; but though out of humility they avoid that false rhetoric which consists in a gaudy, ostentatious

style, they yet aim at true eloquence, by striving to persuade, and move their hearers.

C. I now understand your notions exactly well : let us now return to the eloquence of the scripture.

A. In order to perceive it, nothing is more useful than to have a just taste of ancient simplicity, and this may best be obtained by reading the most* ancient Greek authors. I say the most ancient, for those Greeks whom the Romans so justly despised, and called Græculi, were then entirely degenerate. As I told you before, you ought to be perfectly acquainted with Homer, Plato, Xenophon, and the other earliest writers. After that, you will be no more surprised at the plainness of the scripture style, for in them you will find almost the same kind of customs, the same artless narrations, the same images of great things, and the same movements. The difference betwixt them upon comparison is much to the honour of the scripture. It surpasses them vastly in native simplicity, liveliness, and grandeur. Homer himself never reached the sublimity of Moses' songs; especially the last, which all the Israelitish children were to learn by heart. Never did any ode, either Greek, or Latin, come up to the loftiness of the Psalms, particularly that which begins thus : † ' The mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken,' surpasses the utmost stretch of human invention. Neither Homer nor any other poet ever equalled ‡ Isaiah describing the majesty of God, in whose sight the ' nations of the earth are as the small dust ; yea, less than nothing and vanity ;' seeing it is ' He that stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.' Sometimes this prophet has all the sweetness of an eclogue, in the smiling images he gives us of peace, and sometimes he soars so high as to leave every thing below him. What is there in antiquity that can be compared to the Lamentations of Jeremiah when he tenderly deplores the miseries of his country ? Or to the prophecy of Nahum when he foresees in spirit the proud Nineveh fall under the rage of an invincible army. We fancy that we see the army, and hear the noise of arms and chari-

* Ενδείκνυται δ' ἡμῖν ἕτος ὁ ἀνὴρ (ΠΛΑΤΩΝ) ἐν βελοόμεθα μὴ κατολιγαρῆσαι, ὡς καὶ ἄλλη τις παρὰ τὰ ἐιρημένα ὁδὸς ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλὰ τένει. ποία δὲ καὶ τίς αὕτη ; ἡ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν μεγάλων συγγραφῶν καὶ ποιητῶν μίμησις τε καὶ ζήλωσις. καὶ τέττε γε, φίλτατε, ἀπερὶ ἐχωμεθα τῷ σκοπῷ.

Longinus, §. xiii.

† Psal. l. 1—6.

‡ Isa. xl. 9—28.

ots. Every thing is painted in such a lively manner as strikes the imagination. The prophet far outdoes Homer. Read likewise Daniel denouncing to Belshazzar the divine vengeance ready to overwhelm him : and try if you can find any thing in the most sublime originals of antiquity that can be compared to those passages of sacred writ. As for the rest of scripture, every portion of it is uniform and consistent, every part bears the peculiar character that becomes it. The history, the particular detail of laws, the descriptions, the vehement and pathetic passages, the mysteries, and prophecies, and moral discourses ; in all these there appears a natural and beautiful variety. In short, there is as great a difference betwixt the heathen poets and the prophets, as there is betwixt a false enthusiasm, and the true. The sacred writers, being truly inspired, do in a sensible manner express something divine ; while the others, striving to soar above themselves, always show human weakness in their loftiest flights. The second book of Maccabees, the book of Wisdom, especially at the end ; and Ecclesiasticus in the beginning, discover the gaudy, swelling style that the degenerate Greeks had spread over the east, where their language was established with their dominion. But it would be in vain to enlarge upon all these particulars ; it is by reading that you must discover the truth of them.

B. I long to set about it : we ought to apply ourselves to this kind of study, more than we do.

C. I easily conceive that the Old Testament is written with that magnificence, and those lively images you speak of. But you say nothing of the simplicity of Christ's words.

A. That simplicity of style is entirely according to the ancient taste. It is agreeable both to Moses and the prophets, whose expressions Christ often uses. But though his language be plain and familiar, it is, however, figurative and sublime in many places. I could easily show by particular instances, (if we had the books here to consult,) that we have not a preacher of this age who is so figurative in his most studied sermons, as Jesus Christ was in his most popular discourses. I do not mean those that St. John relates, where almost every thing is sensibly divine ; I speak of his most familiar discourses recorded by the other evangelists. The apostles wrote in the same manner, with this difference ; that Jesus Christ being master of his doctrine, delivers it calmly. He says just what he pleases ; and speaks, with the utmost easiness, of the

heavenly kingdom and glory, as of his* father's house. All those exalted things that astonish us, were natural and familiar to him; he is born there, and only tells us what he† saw, as he himself declares. On the contrary, the apostles‡ sunk under the weight of the truths that were revealed to them; they want words, and are not able to express their ideas. Hence flow those digressions and obscure passages in St. Paul's writings, and those transpositions of his thoughts, which show his mind was transported with the abundance and greatness of the truths that offered themselves to his attention. All this irregularity of style shows that the Spirit of God forcibly guided the minds of the apostles. But notwithstanding these little disorders of their style, every thing in it is noble, lively, and moving. As for St. John's Revelation, we find in it the same grandeur and enthusiasm that there is in the prophets. The expressions are oftentimes the same, and sometimes this resemblance of style gives a mutual light to them both. You see therefore that the eloquence of scripture is not confined to the books of the Old Testament, but is likewise to be found in the New.

C. Supposing the scripture to be eloquent, what will you conclude from it?

A. That those who preach it, may, without scruple, imitate, or rather, borrow, its eloquence.

C. We find that preachers do choose those passages they think most beautiful.

A. But it mangles the scripture thus to show it to Christians only in separate passages. And however great the beauty of such passages may be, it can never be fully perceived unless one knows the connexion of them; for every thing in scripture is connected: and this coherence is the most great and wonderful thing to be seen in the sacred writings. For want of a due knowledge of it, preachers mistake those beautiful passages, and put upon them what sense they please. They content themselves with some ingenious interpretations; which, being arbitrary, have no force to persuade men, and to reform their manners.

B. What would you have preachers to do? Must they use only the language of scripture?

A. I would have them at least not think it enough to join together a few passages of scripture that have no real connexion. I

* John xiv. 2.

† Ch. viii. 38.

‡ 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4, 7.

would have them explain the principles, and the series of the scripture doctrine ; and take the spirit, the style, and the figures of it ; that all their discourses may serve to give people a right understanding, and true relish of God's word. There needs no more to make preachers eloquent ; for by doing this, they would imitate the best model of ancient eloquence.

B. But in this case we behooved (as I said before) to explain the several parts of scripture as they lie.

A. I would not confine all preachers to this. One might make sermons upon the scripture without explaining the several parts of it as they lie. But it must be owned, that preaching would be quite another thing, if, according to ancient custom, the sacred books were thus explained to the people in a connected, judicious manner. Consider what authority a man must have who should say nothing from his own invention ; but only follow and explain the thoughts and words of God. Besides, he would do two things at once. By unfolding the truths of scripture, he would explain the text, and accustom the people to join always the sense and the letter together. What advantage must they not reap if they were used to nourish themselves with this spiritual bread ? An audience who had heard the chief points of the Mosaic law explained, would be able to receive far more benefit from an explication of the truths of the gospel, than the greatest part of Christians are now. The preacher we spoke of before, has this failing among many great qualities, that his sermons are trains of fine reasoning about religion, but they are not religion itself. We apply ourselves too much to drawing of moral characters, and inveighing against the general disorders of mankind ; and we do not sufficiently explain the principles and precepts of the gospel.

C. Preachers choose this way because it is far easier to declaim against the follies and disorders of mankind, than to explain the fundamental truths and duties of religion judiciously. To be able to describe the corruptions of the age, they need only have some knowledge of men and things, and proper words to paint them. But to set the great duties of the gospel in a just light, requires an attentive meditation and study of the holy scriptures. There are but few preachers who have such a solid, comprehensive knowledge of religion as can enable them to explain it clearly to others. Nay, there are some who make pretty discourses, and yet could not catechise the people, and far less make a good homily.

A. Very true ; it is here that our preachers are most defective. Most of their fine sermons contain only philosophical reasonings. Sometimes they preposterously quote scripture only for the sake of decency or ornament ; and it is not then regarded as the word of God, but as the invention of men.

C. You will grant, I hope, that the labours of such men tend to make void the cross of Christ.

A. I give them up ; and contend only for the eloquence of scripture which evangelical preachers ought to imitate. So that we are agreed on this point : provided you will not excuse some zealous preachers, who, under pretence of apostolical simplicity, do not effectually study either the doctrine of scripture or the powerful manner of persuasion that we are taught there. They imagine that they need only bawl, and speak often of hell and the devil. Now without doubt a preacher ought to affect people by strong, and sometimes even by terrible images ; but it is from the scripture that he should learn to make powerful impressions. There he may clearly discover the way to make sermons plain and popular, without losing the force and dignity they ought always to have. For want of this knowledge a preacher oftentimes doth but stun and frighten people, so that they remember but few clear notions ; and even the impressions of terror they received, are not lasting. This mistaken simplicity that some affect, is too often a cloak for ignorance ; and at best it is such an unedifying manner of address, as cannot be acceptable either to God or men. Nothing can excuse such homely preachers, but the sincerity of their intentions. They ought to have studied and meditated much upon the word of God, before they undertook to preach. A priest who understands the scripture fully, and has the gift of speaking, supported by the authority of his function, and of a good life, might make excellent discourses without great preparation. For one speaks easily of such truths as make a clear and strong impression on his mind. Now above all things, such a subject as religion must furnish exalted thoughts, and excite the noblest sentiments ; and this is the design of eloquence. But a preacher ought to speak to his audience as a father would talk to his children, with an affectionate tenderness : and not like a declaimer, pronouncing an harangue with stiffness, and an affected delicacy. It were to be wished indeed that, generally speaking, none were allowed to feed the Christian flocks but their respective shepherds, who ought best to know their wants. In order to this, none should be chosen for pastors,

but such as have the gift of preaching. The neglect of this occasions two evils : one is, that dumb pastors, and such as speak without abilities, are little esteemed. Another evil is, that the function of voluntary preachers allures many vain ambitious spirits, that endeavour to distinguish themselves this way. You know that in former ages the ministry of the word was reserved for the bishops ; especially in the western church. You must have heard of St. Austin's case ; that, contrary to the established rule, he was obliged to preach while he was only a presbyter ; because that Valerius, his bishop and predecessor, was a stranger who could not talk easily : this was the beginning of that custom in the western parts. In the east, priests sooner began to preach, as appears from St. Chrysostom's sermons, which he made at Antioch, when he was only a presbyter.

C. I grant that generally speaking the office of preaching should be reserved for the parochial clergy. This would be the way to restore to the pulpit that simplicity and dignity that ought to adorn it. For if pastors joined the knowledge of the scriptures to their experience in the ministerial function, and the conduct of souls, they would speak in such a way as is best adapted to the wants of their flocks. Whereas those preachers who give up themselves chiefly to study and speculation, are less able to obviate people's prejudices and mistakes ; they do not suit their discourses to vulgar capacities ; and insist chiefly on such general points as do not instruct nor affect men ; to say nothing of the weight and influence that the shepherd's own voice must have among his flock above a stranger's. These, methinks, are convincing reasons for preferring a pastor's sermons before other people's. Of what use are so many young preachers, without experience, without knowledge, and without piety ? It were better to have fewer sermons, and more judicious ones.

B. But there are many priests who are not pastors, and who preach with great success. How many persons are there of the religious orders, who fill the pulpit to advantage !

C. I own there are many : and such men ought to be made pastors of parishes, and even be constrained to undertake the care of souls. Were not anchorets of old forced from their beloved solitude, and raised to public stations, that the light of their piety might shine in the church and edify the faithful ?

A. But it does not belong to us to regulate the discipline of the church. Every age has its proper customs, as the circumstances

of things require. Let us show a regard to whatever the church tolerates ; and without indulging a censorious humour, let us finish our character of a worthy preacher.

C. What you have said already gives me, I think, an exact idea of it.

A. Let us hear then what you reckon necessary to make a complete preacher.

C. I think that he ought to have studied solidly, during his younger days, whatever is most useful in the poetry and eloquence of the ancients.*

A. That is not necessary. It is true when one has finished such studies successfully, they may be of use to him, even towards a right understanding of the scriptures, as St. Paul has shown in a treatise he composed on this very subject. But after all, this sort of study is rather useful than necessary. In the first ages of the church, the clergy found a want of this kind of learning. Those indeed who had applied themselves to it in their youth, turned it to the service of religion, when they became pastors ; but such as had neglected these studies before, were not permitted to follow them, when they had once engaged themselves in the study of the sacred writings, which were then reckoned to be sufficient. Hence came that passage in the apostolical constitutions, which exhorts Christians not to read the heathen authors. 'If you want history (says the book,) or laws, or moral precepts, or eloquence, or poetry, you will find them all in the scriptures.' In effect we have already seen that it is needless to seek elsewhere for any thing that is necessary to form our taste and judgment of true eloquence. St. Austin says that the smaller stock we have of other learning, we ought so much the more to enrich ourselves out of that sacred treasure ; and that seeing our notions are too scanty to express divine things in a proper way, we have need to exalt and improve our knowledge, by the authority of Scripture ; and our language, by the dignity of its expressions. But I ask your pardon for interrupting you. Go on, Sir, if you please.

C. Well then ; let us be content with the sufficiency of Scripture. But shall we not add the fathers ?

* The *Greek* and *Roman* authors have a spirit in them, a force, both of thought and expression, that latter ages have not been able to imitate, *Buchanan* only excepted ; in whom, more particularly in his *Psalms*, there is a beauty, and life, an exactness, as well as liberty, that cannot be imitated, and scarce enough commended.

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A. Without doubt: they are the channels of tradition. It is by their writings that we learn the manner in which the church interpreted the Scripture in all ages.

C. But are preachers obliged to explain every passage of Scripture according to the interpretations that the fathers have given us? We find that one father gives a spiritual or mystical sense; and another gives a literal one. Now which must we choose? For there would be no end of mentioning them all.

A. When I affirm that we ought to interpret the Scripture according to the doctrine of the fathers, I mean, their constant and uniform doctrine. They frequently gave pious interpretations that differed very much from the literal sense; and were not founded on the propheticall allusions, and the mysterious doctrines of religion. Now seeing these interpretations are arbitrary, we are not obliged to follow them; 'seeing they did not follow one another.' But in those places where they explain the sentiments of the church concerning points of faith or practice, it is not allowable to explain the Scripture in a sense contrary to the doctrine of the fathers. This is the authority that we ought to ascribe to them.

C. This seems clear enough. I would therefore have a clergyman (before he begin to preach) be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the fathers, that he may follow it. I would even have him study the principles they laid down for their conduct, their rules of moderation, and their method of instruction.

A. Right; they are our masters. They had an exalted genius; they had great and pious souls, full of heroicall sentiments. They had a singular knowledge of the tempers and manners of men, and acquired a great repute; and a very easy way of preaching. We even find that many of them were very polite, and knew whatever is decent, either in writing or speaking in public; and what is handsome both in familiar conversation, and in discharging the common duties of life. Doubtless all this must have conduced to render them eloquent, and fit to gain upon people's minds. Accordingly we find in their writings a politeness not only of language but of sentiments and manners, which is not to be seen in the writers of the following ages. This just taste and discernment, (which agrees perfectly well with simplicity, and rendered their persons acceptable, and their behaviour engaging) was highly serviceable to religion. And in this point we can scarcely imitate

them enough. So that after the Scriptures, the knowledge of the fathers will help a preacher to compose good sermons.

C. When one has laid such a solid foundation, and edified the church by his exemplary virtues, he would then be fit to explain the gospel with great authority and good effect. For by familiar instructions and useful conferences, (to which we suppose him to have been accustomed betimes,) he must have attained a sufficient freedom and easiness of speaking. Now if such pastors applied themselves to all the particular duties of their function, as administering the sacraments, directing pious souls, and comforting afflicted, or dying persons, it is certain they could not have much time to make elaborate sermons, and learn them word for word. 'The mouth behooved to speak from the abundance of the heart ;'* and communicate to the people the fulness of gospel-knowledge, and the affecting sentiments of the preacher. As for what you said yesterday, about getting sermons by heart, I had the curiosity to seek out a passage in St. Austin that I had read before ; it is to this purpose : ' He thinks that a preacher ought to speak in a more plain and sensible manner than other people ; for, seeing custom and decency will not permit his hearers to ask him any questions, he should be afraid of not adapting his discourse to their capacity. Wherefore, says he, they who get their sermons by heart, word for word, and so cannot repeat and explain a truth till they see that their hearers understand it, must lose one great end and benefit of preaching.' You see by this, Sir, that St. Austin only prepared his subject, without burdening his memory with all the words of his sermons. Though the precepts of true eloquence should require more, yet the rules of the gospel ministry will not permit us to go farther. As for my own part, I have been long of your opinion concerning this matter, because of the many pressing necessities in the Christian church, that require a pastor's continual application. While a priest, who ought to be ' a man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,'† should be diligent in rooting out ignorance and offences from the field of the church ; I think it unworthy of him to waste his time in his closet, in smoothing of periods, giving delicate touches to his descriptions, and inventing quaint divisions. When one falls into the method and employment of these pretty preachers, he can have no time to do any thing else, he applies himself to no other business, or useful

* Mat. xii. 34.

† 2 Tim. iii. 17.

kind of study; nay, to refresh himself, he is oftentimes forced to preach the same sermons over and over again. But what kind of eloquence can a preacher attend to, when his hearers know beforehand all the expressions and pathetic figures he will use? This is a likely way indeed to surprise and astonish; to soften, and move, and persuade them! This must be a strange manner of concealing one's art, and of letting nature speak. To tell you freely, Sir, this gives me great offence. What! shall a dispenser of the divine mysteries be an idle declaimer, jealous of his reputation, and fond of vain pomp? Shall he not dare to speak of God to his people, without having ranged all his words, and learned his lesson by heart like a school boy?

A. I am very much pleased with your zeal. What you say is true. But we must not, however, inveigh against this abuse with too much violence: for we ought to show a regard to persons of worth and piety, who, out of deference to custom, or being prepossessed by example, have, with a good design, fallen into the method that you justly censure. But I am ashamed to interrupt you so often. Go on, I beseech you.

C. I would have a preacher explain the whole plan of religion, and unfold every part of it, in the most intelligible manner, by showing the primitive institution of things, and pointing out the sequel and tradition of them; that by showing the origin and establishment of religion, he might destroy the objections of unbelievers, without offering to attack them openly; lest he should thereby lay a stumbling block in the way of illiterate, well meaning Christians.

A. That is very right. The best way of proving the truth of religion, is to explain it justly; for it carries its own evidence along with it, when we represent it in its native purity. All other proofs that are not drawn from the very foundation of religion itself, and the manner of its propagation, are but foreign to it. Thus, for in-

* Sed his ornatus (repetam enim) virilis, fortis et sanctus sit—non debet quisquam ubi *maxima* rerum *momenta* versantur, de verbis esse sollicitus—prima virtus est vitio carere. Igitur ante omnia, ne speremus ornatam orationem fore, quæ probabilis non erit. *Probabile* autem, Cicero id genus dicit, quod non plus, minusve est quam decet. Non quia comi expolirique non debeat; nam et hæc ornatus pars est: sed quia vitium est, ubique quod nimium est. Itaque vult esse auctoritatem et pondus in verbis: sententias vel graves, vel aptas opinionibus hominum ac moribus.

Quintil. lib. viii. c. 3.

stance, the best proof of the creation of the world, of the deluge, and the miracles of Moses, may be drawn from the nature of those miracles; and the artless, impartial manner in which the Mosaic history is written. A wise, unprejudiced person needs only to read it, to be fully convinced of its truth.

C. I would likewise have a preacher assiduously explain to the people in a connected train not only all the particular precepts and mysteries of the gospel; but likewise the origin and institution of the sacraments; the traditions, discipline, the liturgy, and ceremonies of the church. By these instructions he would guard the faithful against the objections of heretics, and enable them to give an account of their faith, and even to affect such heretics as are not obstinate; he would strengthen people's faith, give them an exalted notion of religion, and make them receive some edification and benefit from what they see in the church. Whereas with the superficial instruction that is generally given them at present, they comprehend little or nothing of what they see, and have but a very confused idea of what they hear from the preacher. It is chiefly for the sake of this connected scheme of instruction that I would have fixed persons, such as pastors, to preach in every parish. I have often observed that there is no art, nor science, that is not taught coherently by principles and method, in a connected train of instructions. Religion is the only thing that is not taught thus to Christians. In their childhood they have a little, dry catechism put into their hands, which they learn by rote, without understanding the sense of it. And after that, they have no other instruction but what they can gather from sermons upon unconnected general subjects. I would, therefore, (as you said) have preachers teach people the first principles of their religion; and, by a due method, lead them on to the highest mysteries of it.

A. That was the ancient way. They began with catechizing: after which, pastors taught their people the several doctrines of the gospel, in a connected train of homilies. This instructed Christians fully in the word of God: you know St. Austin's book, of 'catechizing the ignorant;' and St. Clement's tract, which he composed to show the heathen whom he converted what were the doctrines and manners of the Christian philosophy. In those days the greatest men were employed in these catechetical instructions; and accordingly they produced such wonderful effects, as seem quite incredible to us,

C. In fine, I would have every preacher make such sermons as should not be too troublesome to him, that so he might be able to preach often. They ought therefore to be short : that without fatiguing himself or wearying the people, he might preach every Sunday, after the gospel. As far as we can judge, those aged bishops who lived in former times and had constant labours to employ them, did not make such a stir as our modern preachers do in talking to the people in the midst of divine service ; which the bishops themselves read solemnly every Lord's day.* A preacher now-a-days gets little credit unless he comes out of the pulpit sweating and breathless, and unable to do any thing the rest of the day. The bishop's upper vestment (which was not then opened at the shoulders as it is now, but hung equally down on all sides,) probably hindered him from moving his arms, as some preachers do. So that as their sermons were short, so their action must have been grave and moderate. Now, Sir, is not all this agreeable to your principles ? Is not this the idea you gave us of good preaching ?

A. It is not mine : it is the current notion of all antiquity. The farther I inquire into this matter, the more I am convinced that the ancient form of sermons was the most perfect. The primitive pastors were great men : they were not only very holy, but they had a complete, clear knowledge of religion, and of the best way to persuade men of its truth : and they took care to regulate all the circumstances of it. There is a great deal of wisdom hidden under this air of simplicity : and we ought not to believe that a better method could have been afterwards found out. You have set this whole matter in the best light, and have left me nothing to add :

* A clergyman must bring his mind to an inward and feeling sense of those things that are *prayed* for in our *offices* : this will make him pronounce them with an equal measure of gravity and affection ; and with a due slowness, and emphasis. I do not love the theatrical way of the church of *Rome*, in which it is a great study, and a long practice, to learn in every one of their offices, how they ought to compose their looks, gesture, and voice ; yet a light wandering of the eyes, and a hasty running through the *prayers*, are things highly unbecoming : they very much lessen the majesty of our worship ; and give our enemies advantage to call it *dead* and *formal* ; when they see plainly that he who officiates, is dead and formal in it. A deep sense of the things prayed for, a true recollection and attention of spirit, and a holy earnestness of soul, will give a composure to the look, and a weight to the pronounciation, that will be tempered between affectation on the one hand, and levity on the other.

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indeed you have explained my thoughts better than I should have done myself.

B. You magnify the eloquence, and the sermons of the fathers mightily.

A. I do not think that I commend them too much.

B. I am surprised to see, that after you have been so severe against those orators who mix turns of wit with their discourses, you should be so indulgent to the fathers, whose writings are full of jingling antitheses and quibbles, entirely contrary to all your rules. I wish you would be consistent with yourself. Pray, Sir, unfold all this to us. Particularly, what do you think of Tertullian?

A. There are many excellent things in him. The loftiness of his sentiments is oftentimes admirable. Besides, he should be read for the sake of some principles concerning tradition, some historical facts, and the discipline of his time. But as for his style, I do not pretend to justify it. He has many false and obscure notions, many harsh and perplexed metaphors: and the generality of readers are most fond of his faults. He has spoiled many preachers.* For

* One of the greatest and most remarkable proofs of the strong influence that some imaginations have over others, is the power that some others have to persuade, without any proof. For example, the turn of words that we find in Tertullian, Seneca, Montaigne, and some other authors, has so many charms, and so much lustre, that they dazzle most readers—their *words*, however insignificant, have more force than the *reasons* of other people. I protest I have a great value for some of Tertullian's works; and chiefly for his Apology against the Gentiles; his book of *prescriptions* against heretics; and for some passages of Seneca; though I have very little esteem for Montaigne. Tertullian was indeed a man of great learning: but he had more memory than judgment—the regard he showed to the visions of Montanus, and his prophetesses, is an unquestionable proof of his weak judgment. The disorder of his imagination sensibly appears in the heat, the transports, and enthusiastic flights he falls into, upon trifling subjects,—what could he infer from his pompous descriptions of the changes that happen in the world? Or how could they justify his laying aside his usual dress, to wear the philosophical *cloak*? The moon has different *phases*; the year has several seasons; the fields change their appearance in summer and winter; whole provinces are drowned by inundations, or swallowed up by earthquakes—in fine, all nature is subject to changes—therefore he had reason to wear the *cloak* rather than the common robe!—Nothing can excuse the silly arguments and wild fancies of this author, who, in several others of his works, as well as in that de Pallio, says every thing that comes into his head, if it be a far fetched conceit, or a bold expression, by which he hoped to show the vigour, (we must rather call it, the disorder) of his imagination.

Malebranche's recherche de la verite. Liv. ii. p. 3. c. 3.

the desire of saying something that is singular leads them to study his works: and his uncommon pompous style dazzles them. We must therefore beware of imitating his thoughts or expressions; and only pick out his noble sentiments, and the knowledge of antiquity.

B. What say you of St. Cyprian? Is not his style too swelling?

A. I think it is: and it could scarcely be otherwise in his age and country. But though his language has a tang of the African roughness, and the bombast that prevailed in his days, yet there is great force and eloquence in it. Every where we see a great soul who expresseth his sentiments in a very noble, moving manner. In some places of his works we find* affected ornaments, especially in his epistle to Donatus; which St. Austin quotes, however, as a letter full of eloquence. He says that God permitted those strokes of vain oratory to fall from St. Cyprian's pen, to show posterity how much the spirit of Christian simplicity had, in his following works, retrenched the superfluous ornaments of his style, and reduced it within the bounds of a grave and modest eloquence. This (says St. Austin) is the distinguishing character of all the letters that St. Cyprian wrote afterwards, which we may safely admire and imitate, as being written according to the severest rules of religion; though we cannot hope to come up to them without a great application. In fine, though his letter to Donatus (even in St. Austin's opinion) be too elaborately adorned, it deserves, however, to be called eloquent. For notwithstanding its many rhetorical embellishments, we cannot but perceive that a great part of the epistle is very serious and lively, and most proper to give Donatus a noble idea of christianity. In those passages where he is very earnest, he neglects all turns of wit, and falls into a sublime and vehement strain.

* *Locus enim cum die convenit; et mulcendis sensibus, ac fovendis, ad lenes auras blandientis autumnii hortorum facies amœna consentit. Hic jocundum sermonibus diem ducere, et studentibus fabulis in divina præcepta conscientiam pectoris erudire. Ac ne colloquium nostrum arbiter profanus impediât, aut clamor intemperans familiæ strepentis obtundat, petamus hanc sedem. Dant secessum vicina secreta, ubi dum erratici palmitum lapsus nexibus pendulis per arundines bajulas repunt, viteam porticum frondea tecta fecerunt; bene hic studia in aures damus; et dum in arbores, et in vites quas videmus, oblectante prospectu, oculos amœnamus, animum simul et auditus instruit, et pascit obtutus.*

B. But what do you think of St. Austin? Is he not the most* jingling quibbler that ever wrote? Will you defend him?

A. No: I cannot vindicate him in that. It was the reigning fault of his time; to which his quick, lively fancy naturally inclined him. This shows that he was not a perfect orator. But notwithstanding this defect, he had a great talent for persuasion. He reasoned generally with great force: and he is full of noble notions. He knew the heart of man entirely well, and was so polite, that he carefully observed the strictest decency in all his discourses. In short, he expressed himself almost always in a pathetic, gentle, insinuating manner. Now ought not the fault we observe in so great a man to be forgiven?

C. I must own there is one thing in him that I never observed in any other writer; I mean, that he has a moving way, even when he quibbles. None of his works are more full of jingling turns, than his confessions and soliloquies; and yet we must own they are tender,† and apt to affect the reader.

A. It is because he checks the turns of his fancy as much as he can, by the ingenuous simplicity of his pious, affecting senti-

† *Missi nuncios meos omnes et sensus interiores, ut quærerem te, et non inveni, quia male quærebam. Video enim, lux mea, Deus qui illuminasti me, quia male te per illos quærebam quia tu es intus, et tamen ipsi, ubi intraveris, nesciverunt—et tamen cum Deum meum quæro, quæro nihilominus quandam lucem, quam non capit oculus; quandam vocem super omnem vocem, quam non capit auris; quandam odorem super omnem odorem, quem non capit naris; quandam dulcorem super omnem dulcorem, quem non capit gestus; quandam amplexum super omnem amplexum, quem non capit tactus. Ista lux quidem fulget ubi locus non capit: ista vox sonat, ubi spiritus non rapit: odor iste redolet, ubi flatus, non spargit: sapor iste sapit ubi non est edacitas; amplexus iste tangitur, ubi non divellitur.* *Aug. Solil. §. 31.*

O dies præclara et pulchra, nesciens vesperum, non habens occasum—ubi non erit hostis impugnans, neque ulla illecebra, sed summa et certa securitas, secunda tranquillitas, et tranquilla jocunditas, jocunda felicitas, fœlix æternitas, æterna beatitudo, et beata Trinitas, et Trinitatis unitas, et unitatis Deitas, et Deitatis beata visio, quæ est gaudium Domini Dei tui. *Aug. Solil. §. 35.*

† *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus. Sitivit anima mea ad te Deum, fontem vivum: quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem tuam? O fons vitæ, vena aquarum viventium; quando viniam ad aquas dulcedinis tuæ de terre deserta, invia et inaquosa; ut videam virtutem tuam, et gloriam tuam, et satiem ex aquis misericordiæ tuæ sitim meam? sitio, Domine, fons vitæ es satia me. Sitio, Domine, sitio te Deum vivum: O quando veniam et apparebo, Domine, ante faciem tuam?*

Aug. Solil. cap. xxxv.

ments. All his works plainly show his love of God. He was not only conscious of it, but knew well how to express to others the strong sense he had of it. Now this tender, affecting way, is a part of eloquence. But we see besides that St. Austin knew exactly all the essential rules of it. He tells us* that a persuasive discourse must be simple and natural; that art must not appear in it; and that if it be too fine and elaborate, it puts the hearers upon their guard. To this purpose he applies these words, which you cannot but remember, ‘*qui sophisticæ loquitur odibilis est.*’ He talks likewise very judiciously of the mixing different kinds of style in a discourse; of ranging the several parts of it in such a manner as to make it increase gradually in strength and evidence; of the necessity of being plain and familiar, even as to the tones of the voice, and our action in particular passages; though every thing we say should still have a dignity when we preach religion. In fine, he likewise shows the way to enlighten and move people. These are St. Austin’s notions of eloquence. But if you would see with how much art he actually influenced people’s minds, and with what address he moved their passions, according to the true design of eloquence, you must read the account he gives of a discourse he made to the people of Cæsarea, in Mauritania, in order to abolish a barbarous practice. It seems there prevailed among them an ancient custom, which they had carried to a monstrous pitch of cruelty. His business therefore was to draw off the people from a spectacle that delighted them extremely. Judge now what a difficult enterprise this was. However, he tells us that after he had talked to them for some time, they spake aloud and applauded him. But he concluded that his discourse had not persuaded them, seeing they amused themselves in commending him. He thought he had done nothing while he only raised delight and admiration in his hearers; nor did he begin to hope for any good effect from his discourse, till he saw them weep. ‘In effect,’ says he, ‘the people were at length prevailed on to give up, this delightful spectacle: nor has it been renewed these eight years.’ Is not St. Austin then a true orator? Have we any preachers that are able to talk so powerfully now? As for St. Jerom, he has some faults in his style; but his expressions are manly and great. He is not regular; but he is far more eloquent than most of those who value themselves upon

* De doct. Chr. l. 2.

their oratory. We should judge like mere grammarians if we examined only the style and language of the fathers. You know there is a great difference between eloquence, and what we call elegance, or purity of style. St. Ambrose likewise fell into the fashionable defects of his time ; and gives his discourse such ornaments as were then in vogue. Perhaps these great men (who had higher views than the common rules of rhetoric,) conformed themselves to the prevailing taste of the age they lived in, that they might the better insinuate the truths of religion upon people's minds, by engaging them to hear the word of God with pleasure. But notwithstanding the puns and quibbles that St. Ambrose sometimes uses, we see that he wrote to Theodosius with an inimitable force and persuasion. How much tenderness does he express when he speaks of the death of his brother Satyrus ? In the Roman breviary we have a discourse of his, concerning John the Baptist's head, which, he says, Herod respected and dreaded, even after his death. If you observe that discourse, you will find the end of it very sublime. St. Leo's style is swelling, but truly noble. Pope Gregory lived still in a worse age ; and yet he wrote several things with much strength and dignity. We ought to distinguish those failings into which the degeneracy of arts and learning led these great men, in common with other writers of their several ages : and at the same time observe what their genius and sentiments furnished them with, to persuade their hearers.

C. But do you think, then, that the taste of eloquence was quite lost in those ages that were so happy for religion ?

A. Yes : within a little time after the reign of Augustus, eloquence and the Latin tongue began to decline apace. The fathers did not live till after this corruption : so that we must not look on them as complete models. We must even acknowledge that most of the sermons they have left us are composed with less skill and force, than their other works. When I showed you from the testimony of the fathers that the scripture is eloquent, (which you seemed to believe upon their credit,) I knew very well that the oratory of these witnesses is much inferior to that of the sacred writings themselves. But there are some persons of such a depraved taste, that they cannot relish the beauties of Isaiah ; and yet they will admire Chrysologus, in whom (notwithstanding his fine name,) there is little to be found besides abundance of evangelical piety couched under numberless quibbles and low witticisms. In the

east, the just way of speaking and writing was better preserved ; and the Greek tongue continued for some time almost in its ancient purity. St. Chrysostom spoke it very well. His style, you know, is copious ; but he did not study false ornaments. All his discourse tends to persuasion : he placed every thing with judgment ; and was well acquainted with the holy scriptures and the manners of men. He entered into their hearts, and rendered things familiarly sensible to them. He had sublime and solid notions, and is sometimes very affecting. Upon the whole, we must own he is a great orator. St. Gregory Nanzianzen is more concise, and more poetical ; but not quite so persuasive. And yet he has several moving passages ; particularly, in his funeral oration upon his brother St. Basil ; and in his last discourse at taking leave of Constantinople. St. Basil is grave, sententious, and rigid, even in his style. He had meditated profoundly on all the truths of the gospel ; he knew exactly all the disorders and weaknesses of human nature ; and he had a great sagacity in the conduct of souls. There is nothing more eloquent than his epistle to a virgin that had fallen ; in my opinion it is a masterpiece. But now if a preacher should not have formed his taste in these matters before he studies the fathers, he will be in danger of copying the most unaccurate parts of their works, and may perhaps imitate their chief defects in the sermons he composes.

C. But how long continued this false eloquence which succeeded the true kind ?

A. Till now.

C. What do you mean ? Till now ?

A. Yes, till now : for we have not yet corrected our taste of eloquence, so much as we imagine. You will soon perceive the reason of it. The barbarous nations that overran the Roman empire did spread ignorance and a bad taste every where. Now we descended from them. And though learning began to revive in the fifteenth century, it recovered then but slowly. It was with great difficulty that we were brought by degrees to have any relish of a right manner ; and even now, how many there are who have no notion of it ! However, we ought to show a due respect not only to the fathers, but to other pious authors, who wrote during this long interval of ignorance. From them we learn the traditions of their time, and several other useful instructions. I am quite ashamed of giving my judgment so freely on this point ; but, gentlemen, you desired me. And I shall be

very ready to own my mistakes if any one will undeceive me. But it is time to put an end to this Conversation.

C. We cannot part with you till you give us your opinion about the manner of choosing a text.

A. You know very well that the use of texts arose from the ancient custom that preachers observed in not delivering their own reflections to the people, but only explaining the words of the sacred text. However, by degrees they came to leave off this way of expounding the whole words of the gospel that was appointed for the day, and discoursed only upon one part of it, which they called the text of the sermon. Now if the preacher does not make an exact explication of the whole gospel, or epistle, he ought at least to choose those words that are most important, and best suited to the wants and capacities of the people. He ought to explain them well, and to give a right notion of what is meant by a single word; it is oftentimes necessary to expound many others in the context. But there should be nothing refined or far fetched in such instructions. It must look very strange and awkward in a preacher to set up for wit and delicacy of invention, when he ought to speak with the utmost seriousness and gravity; out of regard to the authority of the Holy Spirit whose words he borrows.

C. I must confess I always disliked a forced text. Have you not observed that the preacher draws from a text whatever sermons he pleases? He insensibly warps and bends his subject to make the text fit the sermon that he has occasion to preach. This is frequently done in the time of Lent. I cannot approve of it.

B. Before we conclude, I must beg of you to satisfy me as to one point that still puzzles me; and after that we will let you go.

A. Come, then, let us hear what it is. I have a great mind to satisfy you if I can. For I heartily wish you would employ your parts in making plain and persuasive sermons.

B. You would have a preacher explain the holy scriptures with connexion, according to the obvious sense of them.

A. Yes: that would be an excellent method.

B. Whence then did it proceed that the fathers interpreted the scripture quite otherwise? They usually give a spiritual, and allegorical meaning to the sacred text. Read St. Austin, St. Ambrose, St. Jerom, Origen, and others of the fathers; they find mysteries every where, and seldom regard the letter of scripture.

A. The Jews that lived in our Saviour's days abounded in these mysterious allegorical interpretations. It seems that the Therapeutæ who lived chiefly at Alexandria, (and whom Philo reckoned to be philosophical Jews, though Eusebius supposes they were primitive Christians,) were extremely addicted to these mystical interpretations. And indeed it was in the city of Alexandria that allegories began to appear with credit among Christians. Origen was the first of the fathers who forsook the literal sense of scripture. You know what disturbance he occasioned in the church. Piety itself seemed to recommend these allegorical interpretations. And besides, there is something in them very agreeable, ingenious, and edifying. Most of the fathers, to gratify the humour of the people, (and probably their own too) made great use of them. But they kept faithfully to the literal, and the prophetic sense (which in its kind is literal too) in all points where they had occasion to show the foundations of the Christian doctrine. When the people were fully instructed in every thing they could learn from the letter of scripture, the fathers gave them those mystical interpretations to edify and comfort them. These explications were exactly adapted to the relish of the eastern people, among whom they first arose; for they are naturally fond of mysterious and allegorical language. They were the more delighted with this variety of interpretations, because of the frequent preaching, and almost constant reading of scripture, which was used in the church. But among us the people are far less instructed: we must do what is most necessary, and begin with the literal sense, without despising the pious explications that the fathers gave. We must take care of providing our daily bread, before we seek after delicacies. In interpreting scripture we cannot do better than to imitate the solidity of St. Chrysostom. Most of our modern preachers do not study allegorical meanings, because they have sufficiently explained the literal sense; but they forsake it because they do not perceive its grandeur, and reckon it dry and barren in comparison of their way of preaching. But we have all the truths and duties of religion in the letter of the scripture, delivered not only with authority, and a singular beauty, but with an inexhaustible variety; so that, without having recourse to mystical interpretations, a preacher may always have a great number of new and noble things to say. It is a deplorable thing to see how much this sacred treasure is neglected even by those who have it always in their hands. If the clergy applied themselves to the ancient

way of making homilies, we should then have two different sorts of preachers. They who have no vivacity, or a poetical genius, would explain the scriptures clearly without imitating its lively, noble manner; and if they expounded the word of God judiciously, and supported their doctrine by an exemplary life, they would be very good preachers. They would have what St. Ambrose requires, a chaste, simple, clear style, full of weight and gravity; without affecting elegance, or despising the smoothness and graces of language. The other sort having a poetical turn of mind would explain the scripture in its own style and figures; and by that means become accomplished preachers. One sort would instruct people with clearness, force and dignity; and the other would add to this powerful instruction, the sublimity, the enthusiasm,* and vehemence of scripture: so that it would (if I may so say) be entire, and living in them, as much as it can be in men who are not miraculously inspired from above.

B. Oh, Sir: I had almost forgot an important article. Have a moment's patience, I beseech you: a few words will satisfy me.

A. What now? Have you any body else to censure?

B. Yes: the panegyrists. Do you think that when they praise a saint, they ought so give his character, as to reduce all his actions and all his virtues to one point?

* Inspiration may be justly called *divine enthusiasm*—for inspiration is a real feeling of the *divine presence*; and enthusiasm a false one.

Characteristics, vol. i. p. 53.

This is what our author advances, when in behalf of *enthusiasm* he quotes its formal enemies, and shows that they are as capable of it as its greatest confessors and martyrs. So far is he from degrading *enthusiasm*, or disclaiming it in himself, that he looks on this *passion*, simply considered, as the most natural; and its *object*, the *justest* in the world. Even *virtue* itself he takes to be no other than a noble *enthusiasm* justly directed and regulated by that high standard which he supposes in the nature of things—nor is thorough *honesty*, in his hypothesis, any other than this zeal, or passion, moving strongly upon the *species*, or view of the *decorum* and *sublime* of actions. Others may pursue different forms, and fix their eye on different species, (as all men do on one or other: the real *honest man*, however plain or simple he appears, has that highest species, [the *honestum*, *pulchrum*, τὸ καλὸν πρέπον] *honesty* itself in view; and, instead of *outward* forms or symmetries, is struck with that of inward character, the *harmony* and numbers of the *heart*, and *beauty* of the *affections*, which form the manners and conduct of a truly social life—upon the whole, therefore according to our author, *enthusiasm* is in itself, a very natural, *honest* passion, and has properly nothing for its object but what is *good* and *honest*.

Char. vol. iii. Miscel. 2. ch. 1.

A. That shows the orator's invention and refined sense.

B. I understand you. It seems you do not like that method.

A. I think it wrong in most cases. He must put a force upon things, who reduces them all to a single point. There are many actions of one's life that flow from divers principles, and plainly show that he possessed very different qualities. The way of referring all the steps of a man's conduct to one cause, is but a scholastic subtilty, which shows that the orator is far from knowing human nature. The true way to draw a just character, is to paint the whole man, and to set him before the hearer's eye, speaking and acting. In describing the course of his life, the preacher should chiefly point out those passages wherein either his natural temper or his piety best appeared. But there should always be something left to the hearer's own observation. The best way of praising holy persons is to recount their laudable actions. This gives a body and force to a panegyric: this is what instructs people, and makes an impression upon their minds. But it frequently happens that they return home without knowing any thing of a person's life, about whom they have heard an hour's discourse; or at least they have heard many remarks upon a few separate facts, related without any connexion. On the contrary, a preacher ought to paint a person to the life, and show what he was in every period, in every condition, and in the most remarkable junctures of his life. This could not hinder one from forming a character of him: nay, it might be better collected from his actions and his words, than from general thoughts and imaginary designs.

B. You would choose then to give the history of a holy person's life, and not make a panegyric.

A. No: You mistake me. I would not make a simple narration. I should think it enough to give a coherent view of the chief facts in a concise, lively, close, pathetic manner. Every thing should help to give a just idea of the holy person I praised, and at the same time to give proper instruction to the hearers. To this I would add such moral reflections, as I should think most suitable. Now do not you think that such a discourse as this would have a noble and amiable simplicity? Do not you believe that the lives of holy people would be better understood this way, and an audience be more edified, than they generally are? Do you not think that according to the rules of eloquence we laid down, such a discourse

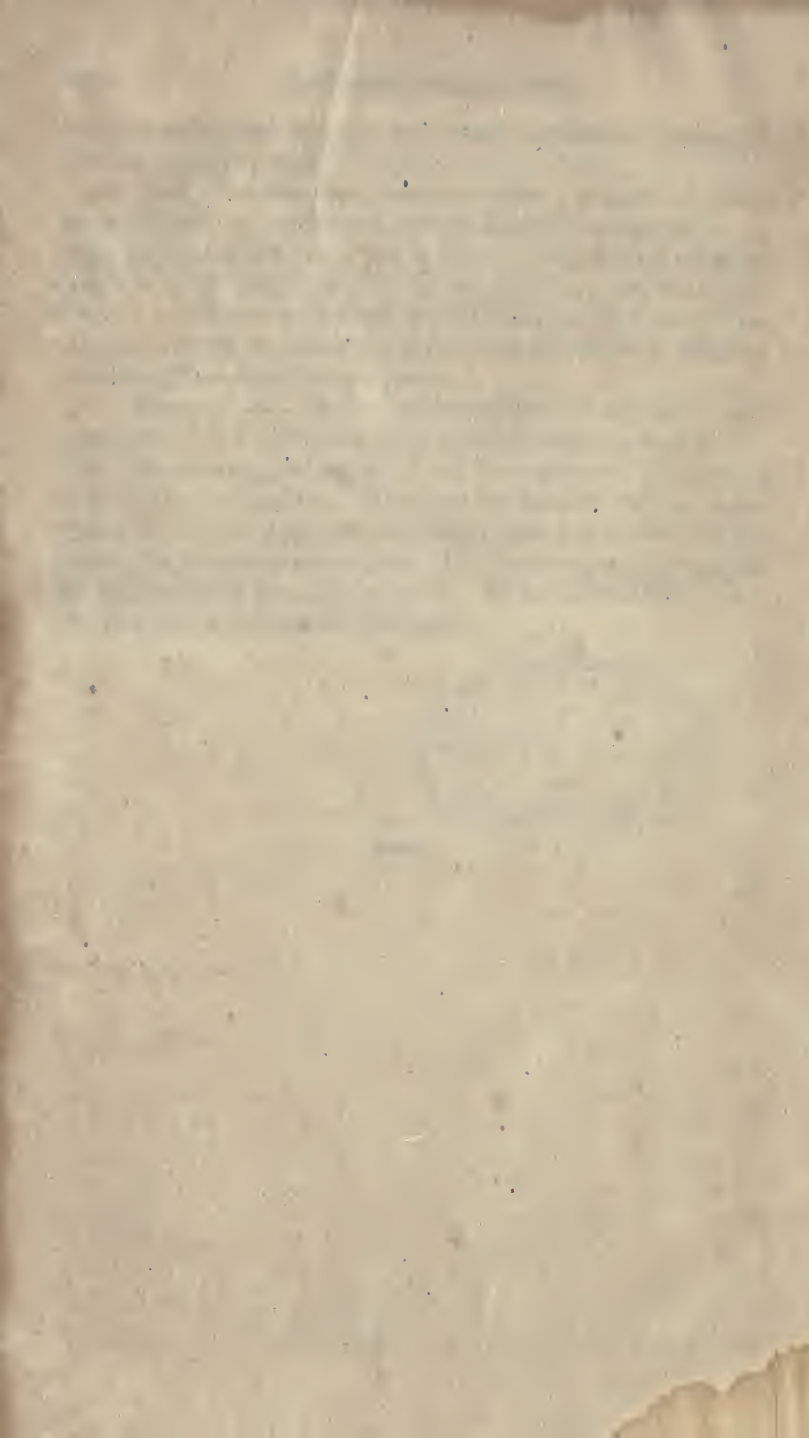
would even be more eloquent than those overstrained panegyrics that are commonly made?

B. I am of opinion that such sermons as you speak of would be as instructive, as affecting, and as agreeable as any other. I am now satisfied, Sir: it is time to release you. I hope the pains you have taken with me will not be lost, for I have resolved to part with all my modern collections and Italian wits; and in a serious manner to study the whole connexion and principles of religion, by tracing them back to their source.

C. Farewell, Sir: the best acknowledgment I can make, is, to assure you, that I will have a great regard to what you have said.

A. Gentlemen, good night. I will leave you with these words of St. Jerom to Nepotian: 'When you teach in the church, do not endeavour to draw applause, but rather sighs and groans from the people; let their tears praise you. The discourses of a clergyman should be full of the holy scripture. Be not a declaimer, but a true preacher of the mysteries of God.'







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